



BOOKLET
SERIES

TOOLS FOR ACTIVISM

COUNTERING ANTI-ISRAEL BOYCOTTS ON CAMPUSES

Best Practices Against BDS

StandWithUs

SCAN FOR THE FULL
STANDWITHUS
BOOKLET LIBRARY

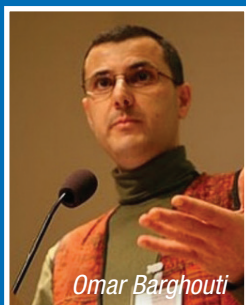


What is the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement (BDS)?

BDS is a global campaign to boycott, divest from, and sanction Israel. BDS seeks to undermine international support for Israel and eventually eliminate the Jewish state.

BDS goes far beyond legitimate criticism of Israeli policy, often crossing the line into antisemitism. It dehumanizes Israelis and their supporters, opposes the rights of Jews to self-determination in their ancestral homeland, and seeks to shut down cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians. Ultimately, BDS hopes to weaken Israel politically, culturally, and economically in order to set the stage for its collapse.

BDS claims its purpose is to help Palestinians achieve freedom and equal rights, but its goals prove this to be false. BDS' main stated goal is to apply pressure until millions of Palestinians



In Their Own Words

"Bringing down Israel really will benefit everyone in the world"

– Lara Kiswani, leading BDS activist during speech at UC Berkeley

"We oppose a Jewish state in any part of Palestine."

– Omar Barghouti, co-founder of BDS, former graduate student at Tel Aviv University

who currently live as refugees in Arab countries are allowed to move into Israel, rather than into a future Palestinian state. According to President Obama, this would “extinguish Israel as a Jewish state, and that’s not an option.”

While it pressures businesses, artists, churches, professional associations, labor unions, local governments, and other institutions, BDS’ biggest focus is the university campus. It masks its bigoted agenda in the appealing language of social justice and human rights, seeking to poison future social and political leaders against Israel.

Together, we can defeat bigotry and stand up for justice.

The following pages contain insights aimed at empowering students to defeat BDS and implement a proactive strategy of their own. Together, we can overcome the challenge BDS poses to our communities on campuses, stand up for Jewish rights, deepen cooperation with Israel, and support a truly just peace between Israelis and Palestinians.



The Challenges of BDS on Campuses

SJP hosts “die-ins” on college campuses, accusing Israel of indiscriminately killing Palestinians.

BDS on campuses usually exists in the form of campaigns by Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and similar groups. SJP has over 150 chapters at universities across North America.

The most damaging campaigns organized by SJP are student government resolutions and student body-wide referendums calling on universities to stop investing in companies doing business with Israel. This is known as divestment. Other campaigns include “apartheid wall” displays, theatrical protests, BDS “teach-ins,” tours by anti-Israel speakers, boycotts against Israeli academic institutions, ending programs for study abroad in Israel, and even isolating pro-Israel and Jewish student groups.

Campus BDS activists are not as “grassroots” or student-led as they claim to be.

Student groups like SJP are the face of the movement on campuses, but they receive funding, training, research, talking points, and legal support from numerous professional off-campus political interest groups. In the U.S., these outside groups include American Muslims for Palestine (AMP), the U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights, the American Friends Service Committee, Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), Palestine Legal, Al-Awda, Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM), Within Our Lifetime, Democratic Socialists of America, and CAIR. In Canada, they include Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME), Independent Jewish Voices (IJV), and PYM.

BDS activists use a variety of tactics.

Anti-Israel groups use traditional tactics like protests, public displays, and events on campus to promote BDS. However, divestment campaigns are a more strategic form of activism. They combine:

- coalition building with influential minority groups;
- lobbying student senators;
- broad PR campaigns on campus;
- drawing in media attention; and
- compelling “action items” for students, faculty, and others to pressure university leaders

With divestment, anti-Israel groups seek to have a deeper and wider influence on future leaders and opinion makers.

BDS is all about changing public opinion.

On the surface, BDS is about pressuring universities to take financial action against Israel, but its real goal is to turn popular

opinion against Israel. It is using financial issues as an excuse to spread anti-Israel propaganda in student governments, among influential student groups, in the media, and elsewhere.

BDS uses appealing words and emotionally manipulative propaganda to succeed.

Anti-Israel extremists have a simple narrative that is easy to relate to, and they cloak their anti-Israel message in the language of human rights and social justice. They use lies and half-truths along with emotional images and stories

to sway the public – particularly people on the left side of the political spectrum.



How Does Divestment Work?

- **Protests, Social Media, Petitions, and More**

There are usually warning signs that BDS is coming to your campus. Are anti-Israel students promoting divestment or BDS on social media? Are they organizing events or rallies that include clear pro-BDS messaging? They may remain in this stage for months or longer before launching a major campaign.

- **Student Government Legislation**

Most divestment campaigns come in the form of student government legislation. These bills/resolutions/motions often claim that certain international companies (particularly those involved in Israel's self-defense against terrorism) are helping Israel commit crimes against the Palestinians and call on the university to stop investing in those companies. Student councils are forced to vote on these bills, resulting in hours or weeks of debate, during which Israel is essentially put on trial.

- **Student Body-Wide Referendum**

A referendum is a general election in which all students can vote on the question of whether or not the university should divest from companies doing business with Israel. BDS groups run social media campaigns, write student newspaper articles, and speak with large numbers of students in person, hoping to mislead and manipulate them into voting yes on divestment.

Divestment is often a win-win for anti-Israel activists. If divestment passes, they claim that the majority of the student body opposes Israel. If it doesn't, they still reach many new people with their propaganda and move closer to turning public opinion against Israel over the long term.

Vote counts do not always decide whether we win or lose.

Defeating divestment is about more than just winning a senate or referendum vote. It's about winning the moral debate about Israel and what real justice in the Middle East looks like. Winning the divestment debate but losing the moral debate is like winning the battle but losing the war.

How Do We Turn This Around?

A Long-Term Strategy

BDS has a long-term strategy. We need to implement one of our own.

1. DEVELOP A COMPELLING NARRATIVE/MESSAGE, AND SET TANGIBLE GOALS.

Find like-minded students, and work together to create an identity for Israel, the Jewish people, and your community on campus. You have to tell your story in a way that not only inspires current supporters but also makes it easy for undecided and uninformed students to relate to you.

Fortunately, Israel and the Jewish people already have an incredibly powerful narrative of justice, resilience, and hope. Israel was built by people who overcame 1,900 years of oppression to achieve freedom in their ancestral home.

This narrative is not meant to replace all existing messaging about Israel. What it should do is create an inspiring foundation to build on as you educate your peers. Building a wider understanding that Israel's existence represents justice for a historically oppressed people should also allow Israel's flaws and challenges to be addressed more rationally. We encourage you to use Israel's story of resilience and empowerment against the odds as the foundation of your messaging on campus.

Tangible Goals

To build a movement, it is crucial to tie your core messaging to a tangible, medium- to long-term goal that your group can achieve together. Examples include student government resolutions, student leadership statements, increasing cooperation with Israel, and campaigns to solve challenges in the local community by using unique Israeli solutions.

2. MOBILIZE.

Mobilize your base. Give them ways to help communicate your messaging and achieve your goals for the year.

3. BUILD COALITIONS.

Organize your members to build coalitions with key student groups and leaders.



"Gratitude Days" is a StandWithUs Experiential Israel Program that empowers students to educate their peers and inspire positive engagement on campus.

4. GAIN REPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP ROLES.

Work with your supporters and coalition partners to gain representation in student government and other leadership roles. This will help you to prevent BDS from hijacking campus institutions and allow you to implement proactive campaigns.

If we follow this strategy as a community, we can ensure future support for Israel, stand up for our rights, and contribute to a just and lasting peace between Israel and its neighbors.

CONCRETE STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTING YOUR LONG-TERM STRATEGY

Join a pro-Israel group on campus or create your own. Many campuses have existing pro-Israel organizations that you can join. If there is no existing group, StandWithUs Campus staff can help you create one.

Start at the foundation: What identity are you creating for Israel and yourselves on campus? Before you do anything, figure out what identity you want to create for Israel on your campus. You need a message that students can connect to personally, emotionally, and intellectually. SJP associates Israel with powerful, negative emotions and stereotypes, so you have to be proactive about tying Israel to resilience, empowerment, diversity, creativity, and other positives. Furthermore, you should proactively position your community as the one that wants a better future for both Israelis and Palestinians, as opposed to BDS, which seeks only to bring down Israel. Your events, flyers, messaging, and tangible goals throughout the year should be guided by the larger story you're trying to tell.

Educate yourself and your community about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and other difficult issues. Your main focus must always be communicating a positive message, but it's also important to know how to have intelligent discussions and debates about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and other challenges that Israel faces. You have to be able to show people the difference between legitimate criticism of Israel and the dehumanizing narrative of BDS. Learn the IHRA definition of antisemitism, including its examples related to Israel. In addition, at the end of this booklet, you will find QR codes and links to further educational resources, which you can use to educate yourself and others.

Organize positive events and programs on campus. You have to be proactive in setting the agenda about Israel on campus and creating positive associations. You will never reach your full potential if the only thing you do is react and defend against anti-Israel campaigns. StandWithUs Campus staff can help you bring positive, inspiring, educational events to your campus.

Build coalitions with influential student groups. Map out your campus, and give each member of your club a set of groups to reach out to. Get to know your audience, support their causes, share relevant aspects of Israel's story, and give people tangible ways to support you in return. This is key for pro-Israel activism in general, but it will also help you enormously if divestment comes to your university because you will have built bridges ahead of time. It's all about relationships.

Relationships matter. Build relationships with student government leaders proactively, and educate them about Israel long before divestment hits. They are much more likely to be receptive if they have a good personal relationship with you, and it will be hard to find friends in an "emergency" situation.

Get involved in campus leadership. If you want to make a bigger impact, get involved in student government, the student newspaper, and/or other key roles. If that isn't for you, find ways to help your friends and allies gain positions of leadership on campus.

Be proactive. You may be able to write your own student government legislation supporting Israel, encouraging coexistence, opposing antisemitism, or something else along those lines. Even if this is unrealistic, there are still other proactive



steps you can take to prevent divestment campaigns from succeeding. StandWithUs staff can help you create a unique strategy for your campus.

Monitor your campus. BDS activists do much of their work behind the scenes, but there may still be ways to figure out if divestment is coming to your campus before it arrives. Here are some ideas that could help you identify a possible BDS campaign in advance:

- Make friends in the student government and other organizations who can notify you if anti-Israel activists start lobbying them.
- Go to anti-Israel events, and listen to what they are discussing.
- Follow anti-Israel social media accounts on your campus for any posts related to BDS.

Defeat divestment. If divestment cannot be prevented, the following are some of the key steps to take:

- *Get organized:* You need a team to combat divestment. If you have multiple Israel groups on campus, work hard to get them on the same page.
- *Messaging:* Once you get organized, pick no more than three core messages, and stick to them throughout your efforts. Staying on message is vital to your success. Do NOT claim that divestment “is divisive,” “marginalizes us,” “makes me feel uncomfortable on campus,” and/or “is anti-peace” without putting substance behind your rhetoric.

Here is an example of a broad message that has been effective:

Divestment harms students and only fuels more conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. We can do better than this misleading and unjust resolution.

- *Delegate responsibilities:* Everyone on your team will have different talents. Some can write speeches, some are good at outreach, while others can run social media campaigns. Delegate tasks to maximize their different strengths.
- *Lobby student representatives:* Often, the leaders of your student government are the ones who ultimately vote on divestment. Your group should meet with every member and educate them about Israel, the conflict, and BDS.
- *Prepare for the debate:* Organize your speakers, speeches, and resources for the divestment debate ahead of time. Assume that your opposition will be extremely prepared, and plan to match them.

Resources

More on BDS:



[standwithus.com/
bds](https://standwithus.com/bds)

Educational Booklets:



[standwithus.com/
booklets](https://standwithus.com/booklets)

Factsheets:



[standwithus.com/
factsheets](https://standwithus.com/factsheets)

We must be proactive. To request resources, a strategy workshop, or other types of support, contact us at campus@standwithus.com.

StandWithUs

Through a generous partnership with Evelyn and Dr. Shmuel Katz, StandWithUs has been able to produce cutting-edge print materials for over two decades. Students, community members, and activists worldwide have used our popular booklets and brochures to educate the public about Israel and antisemitism.



StandUpToHatred.com

SEE THE FULL COLLECTION OF 60+ BOOKLETS AT:

StandWithUs.com/Booklets

**Now, More Than Ever, StandWithUs Needs Your Support.
Help Us Print and Distribute Booklets Like This.**

StandWithUs
PO Box 341069
Los Angeles, CA 90034-1069

Or donate online at
standwithus.com/donate

© 2024 StandWithUs. All rights reserved.