European call: Stop the criminalisation of the BDS movement for justice in Palestine!

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European Coordinating Committee of Committees and Associations for Palestine

**http://www.eccpalestine.org/european-call-stop-the-criminalisation-of-the-bds-movement-for-justice-in-palestine/**

**Stop the criminalisation of the BDS movement for justice in Palestine**

**Support grassroots human rights activists across Europe!**

As Israel is increasingly unable to defend its regime of apartheid and settler colonialism over the Palestinian people and its regular massacres of Palestinians in Gaza, it is seeking supportive governments in Europe and the US to undermine free speech as a way of shielding it from criticism and measures aimed at holding it to account for its gross violations of international law. There is a very coordinated and well-financed campaign led by Israel and its supporters aiming to criminalise political activism against Israeli occupation, based on the particular fear that the worldwide Palestinian-led campaign of [Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)](https://bdsmovement.net/) is succeeding.

At the moment, one of the most significant attacks on the movement is taking place in France. On Sunday the 6th of March, in Paris, a woman demonstrating to defend the rights of women was arrested and held for several hours in a police station. Her crime? Wearing a t-shirt on which was written “Boycott Israel Apartheid – Justice in Palestine”. BDS activists throughout the country face legal retaliation, based on the outrageous so-called “Alliot-Marie Circular”, according to which calling for the boycott of Israeli goods is a form of “racial hatred”. Organisations in France have put together petitions1 contesting this attack on the movement.

On the other side of the Channel, the British government is implementing a new set of rules that will make it harder for local councils and other public bodies including universities to make ethical procurement or investment decisions. Prime Minister David Cameron does not even try to conceal the truth and made very clear that these changes are designed to counter the growing BDS movement. Indeed, his Secretary of State for Justice, Michael Gove, [has stated](http://www.jewishnews.co.uk/michael-gove-boycotting-israel-is-a-crime-worse-than-apartheid/) that the BDS movement is committing “a crime worse than apartheid”.

All over Europe, non-violent grassroots human rights activists are under threat.

In addition Israeli Intelligence Minister Yisrael Katz said at a large Israeli [anti-BDS conference](http://stopbds.ynet.co.il/english.aspx), held on March 28 in Jerusalem, that Israel should engage in “targeted civil eliminations” of BDS « leaders » with the help of Israeli intelligence. That was at the very same conference at which EU Ambassador to Israel was participating alongside settler leaders. It is seriously alarming when government ministers anywhere make such threats against human rights defenders and members of the public.

The European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine calls for an immediate end to the criminalisation of the BDS movement, and strongly expresses its support and solidarity with the activists who work hard to draw public attention to Israel’s repeated violations of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories and within its own 1967 borders.

The struggle for justice in Palestine is gaining ground in European civil society – and so is the fear among the Israeli government and its allies. Their anxiety leads them to desperate moves, such as French Prime Minister Manuel Valls’ recent statement on anti-Zionism being “a synonym for anti-Semitism and the hatred of Israel”.

The BDS movement is anchored in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and rejects, accordingly, all forms of racism and discrimination on the basis of identity, including anti-Semitism.

In order to support [the call from the Palestinian BDS National Committee](https://bdsmovement.net/2016/israels-legal-warfare-on-bds-fosters-repression-13825) and in solidarity with BDS activists in European countries and all over the world ECCP is launching a [PETITION](http://bit.ly/1SZ0uRG) to the European Commission.

Regardless of their position on BDS, human rights organizations and citizens of the world who care about civil rights and human rights have to take a clear stand to defend the right to advocate for BDS as a matter of conscience and free speech and a nonviolent means of civil society to advocate the fundamental rights of the Palestinians. Therefore, we are calling on human rights organisations, civil liberties groups, people of conscience and public figures to sign the petition to the European Commission opposing government-led attacks on free speech and civil liberties that are being implemented in order to undermine civil society’s human rights initiatives in support of the Palestinian people’s struggle for freedom, justice and equality.

We would like to recall the recent [statement from the Swedish foreign ministry](https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/sweden-denies-israeli-claim-it-opposes-bds) re-affirming basic democratic principles by saying that BDS “is a civil society movement” and that “governments should not interfere in civil society organization views”.

The ongoing EU’s support to Israel’s violations of international law and continued application of the EU-Israel Association Agreement is fuelling anti-democratic actions in Europe intended to limit civil liberties, including the right to free speech. In order to counter this attacks we need to build a wide coalition which would bring together all forces – citizens’ initiatives, social movements, trade unions and democratic political parties in defence of human rights.

Grassroots activists who responded positively to the call from a wide range of Palestinian civil society organisations – BDS calls for “ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands occupied in June 1967 and dismantling the Wall; recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties” – must be treated with respect and should not be harassed by police or judicial authorities.

**We call on human rights organisations, civil liberties groups, social movements, trade unions and democratic political parties** **to join our call and sign the** [PETITION](http://bit.ly/1SZ0uRG)**to the European Commission. You can do so by filling in** [THIS FORM](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1MG7Oy8Bjr4yfoi79KiGAHL08-27FLRwQxxpsVxaFgtw/viewform)

You can read the petition to the European Commission in [GERMAN](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Th5J7MsQcPk-PdXuKgePzYDobNR4fSu1yiLT0TO3XuU/edit?usp=sharing)**/** [SPANISH/](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EJVbqAFwhMlGVJSpMCU1ewXXgmUzJ2v9NPIGwDa0j_4/edit?usp=sharing)[DUTCH](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1r3XpTzjk3l0f0CtPGcNcYGtlQbFBh8H-qwnq15oD3_g/edit?usp=sharing)**/** [FRENCH](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GVlWAEs6YjQFr9dJBDaXf1fXgErfXmKN0_5XlRedjxI/edit)**/** [**ITALIAN**](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1k84C2ehLzrDANNmT9K-UP4gWKZQv9mhrAu3xDj9VlMA/edit?usp=sharing)

[Our call in](http://www.agencemediapalestine.fr/blog/2016/04/12/eccp-stop-a-la-criminalisation-du-mouvement-bds-pour-la-justice-en-palestine/) [**FRENCH**/](http://www.eccpalestine.org/stop-a-la-criminalisation-du-mouvement-bds-pour-la-justice-en-palestine/) [DUTCH/](http://www.eccpalestine.org/europese-oproep-stop-het-strafbaar-stellen-van-bds-acties-voor-rechtvaardigheid-in-palestina/)[GERMAN](http://www.eccpalestine.org/europaischer-aufruf-stoppen-sie-die-kriminalisierung-der-bds-bewegung-fur-gerechtigkeit-in-palastina/)**/** [SPANISH](http://www.eccpalestine.org/alto-a-la-criminalizacion-del-movimiento-bds-por-la-justicia-en-palestina/)

1) [http://www.avaaz.org/right\_to\_boycott](http://www.avaaz.org/right_to_boycott,), <http://www.bdsfrance.org/petition-nous-appelons-au-boycott-des-produits-israeliens/>