

## No New EU-Israel Action Plan in April 2009!”

- **Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC) calls for suspension the EU-Israel Association Agreement**
- **100 European organizations pledge support (see below)**

**July 9 2008**

On the fourth anniversary of the International Court of Justice’s ruling that Israel’s Wall is illegal, the BNC is calling on the EU not to upgrade its relationship with Israel and to suspend the EU Association Agreement until Israel comes into compliance with international law and Palestinian human rights.

In a statement, the BNC said:

*“We are appalled by the EU’s blatant refusal to hold Israel to account for its persistent violations of human rights and international law ... The EU is well aware of Israel’s ongoing illegal occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the massive colonization of the latter; after all, the EU member-states have regularly voted for UN resolutions condemning Israel’s human rights violations, collective punishment and construction of settlements and the Wall.”*

The BNC is calling on the EU to reverse the decision taken by the EU Association Council on 16 June 2008 to upgrade the EU-Israel Association Agreement. Israel has been in breach of Clause 2 of the agreement, which demands respect for human rights, since the treaty was signed in 1995.

Today’s call, which is supported by 100 European civil society organizations, is part of a growing movement to isolate Israel internationally through boycott, divestment and sanctions until it conforms to international law and human rights standards.

In 2004, the International Court of Justice ruled the Wall to be illegal, and stated that parts already constructed should be dismantled and that reparations should be made for damages. It reminded all state parties to the IV Geneva Convention of their obligation to enforce international humanitarian law and advised them not to render any aid or assistance to the Wall and its associated regime. One year after the ICJ decision, on July 9 2005, Palestinian civil society issued a Unified Call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel and has received ever growing support from civil society globally.

**ENDS**

**Notes for the editors:**

1. The Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC) is a wide coalition of the largest Palestinian mass organizations, trade unions, networks and organizations. For more see: <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/126>.

Its member organizations include:

<b>Council of National and Islamic Forces in Palestine</b>	General Union of Palestinian Workers
Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions	Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO)
Federation of Independent Trade Unions	Union of Arab Community Based Associations (ITTIJAH)
Palestine Right of Return Coalition	Occupied Palestine and Golan Heights Initiative
General Union of Palestinian Women	Union of Palestinian Farmers

Grassroots Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign (STW)	Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI)
National Committee to Commemorate the Nakba	Civic Coalition for the Defense of Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem (CCDPRJ)

2. For the full text of the Palestinian United Call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (9 July 2005), and endorsers see: <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/52>

## **"We oppose the upgrade of relations between EU and Israel and call for the suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement"**

On Monday, 16 June 2008, the European Union and Israel agreed to upgrade their relations within the framework of the EU-Israel Association Agreement. This starts a process to end in April 2009 with the definition of a common Action Plan that involves the adoption of initiatives and the creation of stronger ties in a broad spectrum, including economic, trade, academic, security and diplomatic fields.

We are appalled by the EU's blatant refusal to hold Israel to account for its persistent violations of human rights and international law.

In their decision the EU declare:

*"Our common goal to upgrade relations stems from our awareness of the traditional links, the cultural and human values, and the economic and security interests that we share. [...] Such a partnership will imply a stronger involvement of the European Union in the peace process and in the monitoring of the situation on the ground."*

This contradicts reality, the EU's self-understanding, and Israel's record of gravely violating the EU's own human rights regulations throughout the history of EU-Israel relations.

What shared values is the EU talking about? The EU is well aware of Israel's ongoing violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in Gaza and the West Bank, including the massive colonization in East Jerusalem and elsewhere. After all, the EU member-states have regularly voted for UN resolutions condemning Israel's human rights violations, collective punishment and construction of settlements and the Wall. Israel still maintains its criminal one-year-long siege on Gaza – described by the current UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights, Prof. Richard Falk as a "prelude to genocide" – that has already cost the lives of 197 patients, mainly children and elderly, all denied freedom of movement to access treatment outside Gaza. Israel's siege has intentionally and systematically impoverished hundreds of thousands of civilians in Gaza, more than 50% by now, shutting down most of the industrial sector and ruining agriculture. Most vital infrastructure has been destroyed and the economy has completely collapsed; malnourishment among children has increased sharply, as noted in various UN reports. Israel has continuously disregarded basic human rights by the enclosure and forced displacement of entire Palestinian communities behind the illegal Wall, the imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians without trial, and its policy of extra-judicial assassination. Furthermore, Israel has stubbornly refused, for over 60 years and despite its obligations under international law, to recognize and implement the right of millions of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes, as stipulated in UNGA resolution 194. Last, but certainly not least, for 60 years, Israel has enacted a system of state-sanctioned racial discrimination against Palestinians with Israeli citizenship in vital domains, including land ownership and employment, simply because they are "non-Jews." We hope Europe does not share these "values."

Legal and moral considerations aside, pragmatic claims that further engagement with Israel allows Europe to play a more effective role in pressuring Israel and promoting "peace", are dangerously similar to the 'constructive engagement' arguments made to justify relations with the South African Apartheid regime, and have long been exposed as fallacious. The only time Europe went on record for

having effectively influenced Israeli policy goes back to 1990 when the Commission had, at Parliament's request, introduced a freeze on scientific cooperation with Israel to protest against the closure of Palestinian schools and universities (particularly Birzeit). This pressure had resulted in the universities being reopened. Since then, Europe's warm embrace of Israel has only encouraged the latter to entrench its occupation and colonization and to ignore its obligations under international law.

On 10 April 2002, the EU Parliament voted to suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement on the grounds of Israeli violations of human rights; however, the Commission refused to comply with the democratic mandate. Instead, it has voted now to upgrade relations without respecting its own stated human rights conditions, effectively rewarding Israel and granting it full impunity for its war crimes in the occupied Gaza Strip and West Bank. By upgrading this already shameful Association Agreement with Israel, the EU has effectively turned into a willing accomplice and outright supporter of Israeli crimes.

In this context the establishment of a full fledged Subcommittee on Human Rights instead of the informal Working Group as part of the agreement is reduced to a fig leaf for the ongoing disrespect of the EU's own principles as pertaining to Israel.

Article 2 of the EU-Israel Association Agreement establishes that:

*"Relations between the parties, as well as all the provisions of the Agreement itself, shall be based on a respect for human rights and democratic principles, which guides their internal policy and constitutes an essential element of this Agreement."*

The Communication on human rights, adopted on 8 May 2001 by the European Commission, states that:

*"The EU should pursue this approach [e.g. dialogue on human rights] wherever possible, while recognising that in some cases, the third country may have no genuine commitment to pursue change through dialogue and consultation, and negative measures may therefore be more appropriate".*

The International Court of Justice advisory opinion on 9 July 2004 confirming the illegality of the Wall built on occupied territory and its associated regime further binds all states not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the illegal situation created by the Wall, and to ensure compliance by Israel with international law.

None of the above has been taken into consideration by the EU Commission. Instead, it proceeds with an upgrade in relations in the very year that marks the 60th anniversary of the 1948 Nakba, now widely recognized as the intentional and systematic ethnic cleansing of more than 750,000 indigenous Palestinians from their homeland and the beginning of ongoing Israeli dispossession, colonization and oppression against the Palestinian people.

A growing international civil society movement that has endorsed the Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel is taking the first steps to hold Israel accountable and to pressure governments to enact sanctions and embargos.

In this spirit, we commit ourselves to raise awareness among the public and lobby and pressure EU decision makers to stop the process of upgrading the agreement and to suspend the EU-Israel Association agreement until Israel meets international standards of law, human rights and justice by:

1. Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall;
2. Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and
3. Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194.

April 2009 should not see a new common action plan with in the EU-Israel Association Agreement, but a suspension of the Agreement altogether.

### **Initiator:**

Palestinian Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions National Committee (BNC).

### **Further Endorsers from Palestine:**

1. Alternative Information Center
2. Arab Cultural Forum
3. Birzeit University Board of Trustees
4. Dalia Association
5. Democracy and Workers' Rights Center in Palestine
6. Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions
7. One Democratic State Group-Gaza
8. University Teachers Association in Palestine

### **European Endorsers:**

1. ACSUR- Las SEGOVIAS
2. AG Palästina / Attac-Hamburg, Germany
3. AIPPP (préservation patrimoine palestinien), France
4. AK Nahost Berlin, Germany
5. Aktionsbündnis für einen gerechten Frieden in Palästina, Deutschland
6. Al Awda, Italy
7. Anti-imperialist Camp Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign
8. Arab Cause Solidarity Committee in Spain (CSCA)
9. Arbeitskreis Palästina Tübingen (Committee for Palestine Tübingen)
10. Association "100 idee per la pace", Siena, Italy
11. Association belgo-palestinienne, Belgium
12. Association of Palestinian Communities, UK
13. Associazione di Amicizia Italo-Palestinese Onlus di Firenze
14. Austrian Campaign "Gaza muss leben"
15. Britain Palestine Twinning Network
16. CCIPPP, France
17. Civimed Initiatives (formation à médiation), France
18. CODIP vzw (Centre for Development, Documentation and Information Palestine), Belgium
19. Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado (CEAR)
20. Comité de Soutien au peuple Palestinien, Belgium
21. Comité pour une Paix Juste au Proche Orient-Luxembourg/ Committee for a Just Peace in the Middle East, Luxembourg
22. Coordination de l'Appel de Strasbourg, (France
23. European Jews for a Just Peace
24. Farrah-France (réfugiés), France
25. Federación de Asociaciones de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos – España
26. FIOM-CGIL International Department, Italy
27. Frauen in Schwarz (Wien) - Women in Black (Vienna)
28. Friends of Al-Aqsa, UK
29. Fundación Iepala
30. Gaza Vivrà
31. German Peace Circle e.V. i.G.
32. German-Palestinian Association (Deutsch-Palästinensische Gesellschaft e.V.)
33. Handicap-Solidarité, France
34. Hands Across the Divide, Cyprus
35. Hoja de Ruta
36. Intal, Belgium
37. International Jewish Solidarity Network
38. International Solidarity movement (ISM)
39. Jewish Voice for a Just Peace in Middel East - EJJP Germany" (Juedische Stimme für gerechten Frieden in Nahost - EJJP Deutschland e. V.)
40. Jews Against Zionism
41. Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights

42. Leuvense Actiegroep Palestina (LAP)
43. LSE SU Palestine Society, UK
44. L'union des Progressistes Juifs de Belgique
45. Nahostkomitee in der Berliner Friedenskoordination, Berlin Germany
46. NEAG Alternatives to Violence, Netherlands
47. Netherlands Palestine Committee
48. Oekumenisches Zentrum für Umwelt-, Friedens- und Eine-Welt-Arbeit / Ecumenical Center for Environment-, Peace and One-World-Work, Berlin
49. Palestine Think Tank
50. Palestinian Forum in Britain (PFB)
51. Pax Christi Middle East Commission German Section
52. Plataforma Aturem la Guerra, Catalunya
53. Palestine Solidarity Campaign, UK
54. Red internacionalista de jóvenes vascxs Kamaradak- Kamaradak Gazte Internazionalisten Sarea, Basque Country
55. Red Solidaria contra la Ocupación de Palestina - Solidarity Network against Occupation of Palestine (Spain):
  1. Asociación Al-Quds de Solidaridad con los Pueblos del Mundo Árabe (Málaga)
  2. ASPA Asociación Andaluza por la Solidaridad y Paz
  3. Asociación Hispano Palestina Jerusalén (Madrid)
  4. Asociación Pro-Derechos Humanos de Andalucía
  5. Boicot Preventiu
  6. CSCA (Madrid, Asturias)
  7. Comunidad Palestina en Canarias
  8. Comunitat Palestina Catalunya
  9. Ecologistas en Acción
  10. Grupo de ONGs por Palestina
  11. INTERPUEBLOS - Comité de Solidaridad con los Pueblos
  12. ISM Cataluña / Valencia
  13. MEWANDO (Euzkadi) - (Middle East without war and oppression) is a network created by six NGO's and supported by the Basque Government. MEWANDO members are: Mundubat; Solidaridad Internacional-Nazioarteko Elkartasuna; Médicos del Mundo-Euskadi, Fundación Paz y Solidaridad-Comisiones Obreras de Euskadi, Coordinadora de ONG's de Euskadi, Centro Cultural Palestino Biladi, Paz con Dignidad Euskadi.
  14. Mujeres por la Paz - Acción solidaria con Palestina (Canarias)
  15. PCE (Madrid)
  16. Palestinarekin Elkartasuna komite Internazionalistak (Euzkadi)
  17. Paz Ahora
  18. Paz con Dignidad
  19. Plataforma de Solidaridad con Palestina (Sevilla)
  20. SODEPAU
  21. SODEPAZ
  22. Xarxa de Solidaritat amb Palestina de Valencia
  23. Xarxa d'Enllaç amb Palestina
  24. Komite Internazionalistak (Euzkadi)
86. Rete-ECO (Rete degli Ebrei contro l'Occupazione - Italian Network of Jews against the Occupation)
87. Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign
88. Society for Austro-Arab Relations, Austria
89. Stop the War Coalition, UK
90. Tlaxcala Translators Collective
91. Un ponte per..., Italy
92. Une Autre Gauche, Belgium
93. Verein Arabischer Studenten und Akademiker Tübingen (Association of Arab Students and Academics Tübingen)
94. Vlaams Palestina Komitee vzw, Belgium
95. Vrede vzw, Belgium
96. War on Want, UK
97. WeAreWideAwake.org

98. Werkgroep Keerpunt (Taskgroup Turningpoint), Netherlands

99. Women for Peace Uppsala, Sweden

100. Young Palestinian Association "Wael Zuaiter", Italy