

Palestine Solidarity Network

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Media release:

## **Innovation expedition to Israel “politically naïve”**

New Zealand’s so termed innovation expedition to Israel is ‘politically naïve and economically desperate’ according to Palestine Solidarity Network spokesperson John Minto.

A delegation of 50 New Zealand business leaders, headed by Spark CEO Simon Moutter, is heading to Israel this week.

But Minto says such large scale and high visibility tours are arranged primarily as part of Israel’s international public relations campaign to counter the bad publicity Israel gets when it builds more illegal settlements on the West Bank and its forces regularly attack Gaza.

“In particular Israel is getting worried that the international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign is starting to hurt Israel economically. In 2014 direct foreign investment in Israel fell to half the level of the year before. Economic commentators says this was due to BDS action and international concern following another bloody attack by Israel on Gaza that year,” John Minto says.

“It’s very similar to the declining days of the apartheid regime in South Africa in the 1980s. The government there tried to present itself to the world as running a normal country, whereas the truth was emerging of a deeply structured racial hierarchy which eventually collapsed.”

Minto says similar evidence is now before the public that Israel is run on very similar lines.

“For instance the nearly three million Palestinians of the West Bank and East Jerusalem don’t get a vote in Israeli elections, yet the 600,000 Jewish people who live there in illegal settlements are eligible to vote. There is discrimination at every turn in favour of just one ethnic group and that is increasingly clear as Israeli government policy.”

Minto says New Zealand companies should not be taken in by the lure of business prospects in Israel.

“The worldwide trend is to turn away from Israel, not just economically, as a means to put pressure on Israel to comply with its obligations under international law, but also because Israel is not a secure long term prospect to do business with.”

Just look at the New Zealand Superannuation Fund. In 2012, the Super Fund pulled its investments in four Israeli companies because of their complicity in building illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories. It still invests in Israeli banks which fund those same settlements, but the days of those immoral investments are numbered as well.”

Minto says the New Zealand BDS movement will target any business or science arrangements which might emerge out of the New Zealand delegation visit.

“Israel’s greatest technological specialty for export is in mass surveillance and military control of civilian populations. We certainly don’t want that sort of enterprise here. But nor do we want to have New Zealand ties of any sort with Israel cemented in when our international obligations are to force Israeli compliance with international law.”

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