



NZ PALESTINE SOLIDARITY NETWORK

شبكة التضامن مع فلسطين – نيوزيلندا

NZ Palestine Solidarity Network
PO Box 86022
Mangere East
Auckland 2158

1 June 2016

Dear

I'm writing on behalf of the Palestine Solidarity Network to express our concern at your announced 'Innovation mission to Israel' this week (NZ Herald 28.5.16).

We want to take this opportunity to raise the issue of the ongoing settler colonialism and system of apartheid throughout Historical Palestine, and to ask you to support the call¹ by Palestinian civil society for international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) on Israel until Palestinian human rights are recognised. This call includes an economic, academic, cultural and political boycott of Israel. We urge you to adopt the BDS principles for divestment² and cultural boycott³.

The international 'BDS' campaign is gaining significant support internationally, especially in recent months. We feel it's important for New Zealand to be engaged in this process, and a crucial aspect of this is for high-profile New Zealanders to decline invitations to visit Israel, in any capacity. The boycott is not based on religion or nationality. Our aim is to isolate Israel for its racist policies until such time as it complies with international humanitarian law, many expressed in the hundreds of UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions it continues to violate.

Our standpoint is that there is no place for representatives of New Zealand forging diplomatic, cultural or economic ties with Israel, as long as it continues to flout international law and uphold its racist policies. Although you represent private interests and are not official representatives of the New Zealand public, there is nevertheless a responsibility to recognise that you will be seen as ambassadors of New Zealand business, and by extension the country as a whole. The New Zealand public is becoming increasingly aware that Israel's basic policy and action throughout Historical Palestine is racist and violent. This 'mission' is merely another public relations effort on Israel's part to whitewash its crimes – a deliberate strategy to both legitimise and distract the

1 <http://www.bdsmovement.net/call>

2 <https://bdsmovement.net/activecamps/divestment>

3 <http://www.pacbi.org>

international community from the brutal reality of its belligerent occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (including East Jerusalem) and Syrian Golan Heights and entrenched institutional racism in the 1948 territories.

It is important also to note that the call by the International Court of Justice in 2004 for Israel to cease its illegal settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories was for the international community of nations to ensure that Israel ceased such illegal activities. Going to Israel in such a context, and no doubt entering into the Occupied Palestinian Territories as you will be doing, is invariably taken by Israel as a form of endorsement of its occupation and an approval of Israeli policies.

The same reading was taken by apartheid South Africa during the period of sporting contacts by New Zealand with South Africa. The association with apartheid was defended by a claim that sport had nothing to do with politics. In this instance any statement by you that business has nothing to do with politics will be perceived in the same way.

We suggest also that building bridges with Israel is not sensible business. New Zealand's own Superannuation Fund withdrew its investment in four Israeli companies in 2012 because of their association with the construction of illegal Israeli settlements, with the Fund's continued investment in Israeli banks, such as Bank Hapoalim, which fund those settlements, surely in doubt as well.

Much of Israel's vaunted high tech innovation and economy is founded on electronic and military means of control of large numbers of civilians. Direct Foreign Investment in Israeli, especially in this sector, has collapsed in the wake of Israel's most recent onslaught on Gaza. It would be shortsighted of New Zealand companies to rush to fill the gap.

Yours sincerely,

Sian Robertson

NZ Palestine Solidarity Network organiser
Ph: 0212505790
Email: admin@palestinesolidaritynz.net