

Kairos Palestine position on the BDS call

We have lately received several requests to clarify our call for BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) mentioned in the Kairos document. Based on what this document asserts, the Kairos group would like to make the following comments:

- The Kairos document is not primarily a document about BDS; it is a *Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the heart of Palestinian suffering*. Reading the document as a call for BDS is misinterpreting the document and limiting its scope.
- The reference to BDS in the document is always associated with the occupation of Palestinian land by Israel:
“[T]o engage in divestment and in an economic and commercial boycott of everything produced by the occupation” (4.2.6); “... with regards to Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land. As we have already said, we see the boycott and disinvestment as tools of non violence for justice, peace and security for all” (6.3); “... the beginning of a system of economic sanctions and boycott to be applied against Israel... in order to reach a just and definitive peace that will put an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian land... and will guarantee security and peace for all” (7.1).
- The goal of BDS is to end the occupation and secure peace and security for all; it is a non-violent tool. By affirming this tactic, we reject violence and revenge and suggest peaceful ways of ending the occupation. Our analysis shows this is an effective tool. Richard Falk, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, also praises its effectiveness: *“[BDS] is also making use of persuasive and coercive non-violent means to secure the human rights of Palestinians living under oppressive and unlawful conditions of occupation that the actions of diplomacy or the authority of the organized international community seem unable to correct. BDS represents the mobilized efforts of global civil society to replace a regime of force with the rule of law in relation to the OPT.”*¹
- *“Justice, peace and security for all”* means for both the Palestinians and the Israelis. The system of boycott should lead to justice and freedom for the Palestinians, and peace and security for the Israelis as well. *“We call on the Israelis to end the occupation. Then they will see a new world in which there is no fear, no threat, but rather security, justice and peace” (1.4).*
- When the Church of South Africa issued its call for boycott, many churches worldwide rejected that call, claiming that it would hurt the blacks and prevent them from having an influence on the Apartheid regime. The proposed strategy of “constructive engagement” with the Apartheid system proved to be an error of judgment, while the boycott proved to be successful in fighting Apartheid in South Africa. It is hard to understand how the same conclusions – the same errors, the same successes – would not apply to the sin of occupation.
- When Martin Luther King called for a boycott of buses in 1956, the same concern was expressed by church leaders about the use of boycott; in this context, too, that non-violent tool proved successful.

¹ Falk, Richard. “Human Rights Situation in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories,” p. 26.

- We understand President Obama’s allusion - in his speech at the University of Cairo, June 4, 2009² - to the success of non violent resistance of Black Americans and South Africans in their struggle for full and equal rights as a call to BDS. This is in fact, how both peoples, supported by the international community, obliged the oppressors to cease their oppression.
- We suggest the use of BDS as a non-violent tool, implying that this is just one among other tools to be used. The main question remains: what should be done? There are many possible methods and solutions to be envisioned and discussed. The Kairos is an invitation for dialogue in the spirit of faith, hope and love. If other viable non-violent alternatives are suggested, they will certainly be positively considered.
- Is the BDS movement directed against the occupation or against Israel? On the one hand, the fundamental goal remains the end of occupation. At the same time, the occupation is not a separate system from the policies of the Israeli governments: those governments have supported the occupation, encouraged the control of Palestinian land (through settlements, the wall, the confiscation of Palestinian property), and persistently controlled the life of the Palestinians. That is why BDS is not a goal in itself, but rather a means by which to pressure the Israeli government to end the occupation and work for justice and peace.
- In this vein, Richard Falk also urges: “Consideration should be given to the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions campaign as a means of implementing human rights, including the right of self-determination, and guidelines should be provided for such a campaign.”³
- *“Our question to our brothers and sisters in the Churches today is: Are you willing and able to work with us to restore our freedom? Our freedom will be the only sustainable foundation for both Palestinians and Israelis to live in love, justice, peace and security. (6.1).*
- The Kairos group is always open to ideas and suggestions for new methods and ideas that will contribute to achieving our goals. We look forward to receiving these ideas.

Other comments and articles for the group, or members of the group, will follow.

Kairos Palestine
 February, 2010
www.kairopalestine.ps

² http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Cairo-University-6-04-09/

³ Ibid., p. 28