

ISRAEL – IS BOYCOTT THE ANSWER?

Across the world there is a growing movement calling for international sanctions to be imposed against the State of Israel because of its treatment of the Palestinian people. This has intensified in recent weeks following the assault by the Israeli Navy on the peaceful flotilla of ships carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza – and especially because of the killing of ten peace activists on board the Mavi Marmara ship.

For decades Israel has illegally occupied Palestinian territory and denied Palestinians the most basic human rights or self-determination. The Israeli assault on Gaza at the beginning of 2009, which claimed the lives of almost 1,400 Palestinians, including over 300 children, horrified people across the globe.

The continuing Israeli siege of Gaza, where 1.5 million Palestinians are imprisoned in the most densely populated territory in the world and vital humanitarian supplies are systematically blocked by Israel is causing an ever-worsening humanitarian disaster. The situation is now so desperate that many charities and political leaders worldwide are calling for the siege to be lifted.

Across the Palestinian territories, Israel continues to systematically kill, detain and expel Palestinian civilians with impunity - daily expanding the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands. Women continue to give birth stranded at checkpoints, prisoners continue to be tortured, and adults and children alike continue to be killed. Those not expelled, imprisoned or killed live under a system of overt apartheid, discrimination and constant threat.

Few now dispute that Israel has oppressed the Palestinian people in many ways for decades. Yet, despite widespread condemnation of Israel's policies by the UN and various international conventions, the international community of nations has failed to bring about Israel's compliance with international law or a respect for basic human rights.

Against this background and even before the recent attack by Israel on the flotilla of aid, calls have grown louder for decisive action against Israel in the form of an international campaign of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) - similar to that applied to Apartheid South Africa in the past.

However, there is disagreement on whether such a campaign is justified or would be effective in bringing a just solution to Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Irish Anti-War Movement has organised a public debate to provide a forum for political and civil society groups here in Ireland to discuss the arguments for and against imposing a boycott and sanctions on Israel, if we are to help achieve justice for the Palestinians and peace in the region.

The debate will take place on Tuesday 22nd June in the Gresham Hotel, O'Connell St in Dublin. Speakers will include: Billy Timmins TD (Fine Gael), Joe Costello TD (Labour), Senator Mark Dearey (Greens), Mags O'Brien (Trade Union Friends of Palestine) and Richard Boyd Barrett (Chair, Steering Committee IAWM).

Come along to participate in this important debate.

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