



Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up,
Housing and Communities of the UK

Dear Rt Hon Michael Gove MP,

2nd July 2023

I am writing to you on behalf of the British Palestinian Committee (BPC), in response to the Government's 'Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill' and statements made regarding Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions (BDS) campaigns, which are of serious concern to our members.

The BPC is an independent group of British Palestinians representing a broad and diverse range of experiences and perspectives, advocating for Palestinian rights by ensuring that British-Palestinian voices are integral to public discourse and policymaking on Palestine.

As I write, the Palestinian people are confronting an ever-tightening siege on their political, social, and economic life, with the combined force of the Israeli military and settler population it supports unleashing a violent collective punishment on an occupied people. In May, we witnessed Israel's bombardment of the captive population in Gaza. This month alone, Israeli military forces have invaded the Palestinian cities of Ramallah, Nablus, and Jenin, while armed settlers, with the protection of soldiers, have launched waves of assaults on Palestinian communities in the West Bank. More than 170 Palestinians have now been killed, among them 26 children, making 2023 on track to be the most lethal year yet for Palestinians since the UN began collecting data in 2005. Almost 1000 Palestinians in Jerusalem face expulsion from their homes and home demolitions are at their highest rate in years. Meanwhile, the Israeli government has announced a massive expansion of settlements, emboldened by international complicity to accelerate its more than 75-year project of colonising Palestine and dispossessing its people of their land.

By launching this attack on Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaigns at this moment of extreme Israeli violence towards Palestinians, the Government has chosen to ally with one of Israel's most radical right-wing governments and assist in its efforts to negate our existence and crush any resistance to their colonial project. You have argued that BDS campaigns lead to hatred and abuse, a claim refuted by the Government's own impact assessment. In reality, these campaigns are at the forefront of ensuring public bodies uphold their legal and moral duties, so they are not complicit in breaches of international law, an obligation the Government continues to fail to meet.

Boycott campaigns are inspired by a vision of peace and justice rooted in international law and universal principles of human rights embodied in the collective call issued to the international community by Palestinian civil society in 2005. The request echoed earlier generations fighting against racism and apartheid. It asks for people of conscience all over the world to engage in Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel until core Palestinian rights, enshrined in international law, are achieved. The call was and remains a collective response on the part of the Palestinian people to the international community's refusal to protect them and uphold their rights, and the failure of a so-called 'peace-process' that avoided addressing the roots of the injustice by

design. The horror being inflicted on Palestinians today, with the complicity of this Government, is a stark reminder that these campaigns are more urgent than ever.

You have claimed that BDS campaigns single out Israel for special treatment but in this bill the government has sought to grant Israel unique immunity from accountability. This sends a clear message to Israel that the UK is a willing participant in its accelerating settler-colonial project in Palestine. Although we are absent from the government's impact assessment and no effort on the part of the Government has been made to consult with our community, Palestinians are once again being targeted. The 'anti-boycott bill' will require that public institutions, which belong to us all, become active agents in the ongoing dispossession of our own people. Most alarming of all is the exceptional legal protection this bill affords Israel and its actions. In effect, this singles out Palestinians as the only people denied protection by the law.

Previous generations of Palestinians experienced the UK's brutal denial of our people's right to self-determination under British colonial rule and the foundations it laid for the ethnic cleansing that took place 75 years ago during the Nakba. The UK has an ongoing and outstanding colonial debt that our generation will neither ignore, nor forget. It can only be addressed through recognising the root causes and ongoing drivers of the injustice Palestinians continue to face, anchoring UK policymaking in universal principles, international mechanisms, and the rule of law, and centring Palestinian perspectives in policymaking towards Palestine.

The fight to defend fundamental Palestinian rights is a universal one, allied with all struggles for freedom, justice, and equality. The BPC has joined a broad civil society coalition, including more than 60 trade unions, charities, NGOs, faith, climate justice, human rights, and solidarity organisations, committed to defending the fundamental democratic rights threatened by this bill. Our local democracy, freedom of expression and the right of public bodies to freely decide how they invest their funds are all at stake. For breaches of Palestinian rights and the basic civil liberties that belong to all of us as British citizens, this bill should be clearly opposed at every stage.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Aimee Shalan, Chair
On behalf of the British Palestinian Committee

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Lisa Nandy MP
Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up,
Housing and Communities of the UK

Dear Lisa Nandy MP,

2nd July 2023

I am writing to you on behalf of the British Palestinian Committee (BPC), in response to the Opposition's reported position in relation to the 'Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill' and statements made regarding Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions (BDS) campaigns, which are of serious concern to our members. As representatives of a diverse group of British Palestinians, the BPC strives to ensure that British Palestinian voices are integral to public discourse and policymaking on Palestine.

Today, the Palestinian people are facing an ever more restrictive siege on their political, social, and economic lives. The Israeli military, and settler population which it supports, continue to impose violent collective punishment on a people living under military occupation. In May, we witnessed Israel's bombardment of the captive population in Gaza. In the past month alone, Israeli military forces have invaded Palestinian cities across the occupied West Bank, including Ramallah, Nablus, and Jenin, while armed settlers, protected by soldiers, have launched numerous assaults on Palestinian communities. More than 170 Palestinians, including 26 children, have been killed by Israeli violence, making 2023 the deadliest year for Palestinians since the UN began collecting data in 2005. Meanwhile, nearly 1,000 Palestinians in Jerusalem face the threat of expulsion from their homes, and home demolitions are increasing at an alarming rate. Emboldened by international complicity, the Israeli government has announced a significant expansion of settlements, accelerating their decades-long project of colonising Palestine and displacing its people from their land.

By launching an attack on BDS campaigns at this moment of extreme Israeli violence towards Palestinians, the UK Government - now with the Opposition's endorsement - has chosen to ally with one of Israel's most radical right-wing administrations and assist in its efforts to negate our existence and crush any resistance to their colonial project. Following the Government's lead, you have consistently sought to delegitimise Palestinian solidarity through repeated association of BDS campaigns with hatred and discrimination. In reality, these campaigns are at the forefront of ensuring public bodies uphold their legal and moral duties, so they are not complicit in breaches of international law and the dispossession of Palestinians, an obligation the UK continues to fail to meet.

Boycott campaigns are inspired by the Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS issued to the international community in 2005. The call embodies a vision of peace and justice rooted in international law and universal principles of human rights, echoing earlier generations' fights against racism and apartheid. It asks for people of conscience all over the world to engage in Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel until core Palestinian rights, enshrined in international law, are achieved. In joining the assault on BDS, the Opposition attacks the core demand of international solidarity made by the Palestinian people as a whole.

The call was and remains a collective response on the part of the Palestinian people to the international community's refusal to ensure their protection and

uphold their rights, and the failure of a so-called 'peace-process' that avoided addressing the roots of the injustice by design. It is of deep concern, therefore, that the Opposition has departed from the framework of international law and is instead embracing a policy of normalising the occupation through support for 'coexistence' projects that divert attention away from holding Israel accountable. The gulf between the horror being inflicted on Palestinians today and the UK's response is a stark reminder that civic campaigns for BDS are more urgent than ever.

You have claimed that BDS campaigns single out Israel for special treatment but in this bill the Government has sought to grant Israel unique immunity from accountability. This sends a clear message to Israel that the UK is a willing participant in its accelerating settler-colonial project in Palestine. Although we are absent from the Government's impact assessment and no effort on the part of the Government or Opposition has been made to consult with our community, Palestinians are the ones being targeted. The 'anti-boycott bill' will require that public institutions, which belong to us all, become active agents in the ongoing dispossession of our own people. Most alarming of all is the exceptional legal protection this bill affords Israel and its actions. In effect, this singles out Palestinians as the only people denied protection by the law. Regrettably, the Opposition has remained silent on these matters.

Previous generations of Palestinians experienced the UK's brutal denial of our people's right to self-determination under British colonial rule and the foundations it laid for the ethnic cleansing that took place 75 years ago during the Nakba. The UK has an ongoing and outstanding colonial debt that our generation will neither ignore, nor forget. It can only be addressed through recognising the root causes and ongoing drivers of the problem, anchoring UK policymaking in universal principles, international mechanisms, and the rule of law, and centring Palestinian perspectives in policymaking towards Palestine.

The fight to defend fundamental Palestinian rights is a universal one, allied with all struggles for freedom, justice, and equality. The BPC has joined a broad civil society coalition, including more than 60 trade unions, charities, NGOs, faith, climate justice, human rights, and solidarity organisations, committed to defending the fundamental democratic rights threatened by this bill. Our local democracy, freedom of expression and the right of public bodies to freely decide how they invest their funds are all at stake. For breaches of Palestinian rights and the basic civil liberties that belong to all of us as British citizens, this bill should be clearly opposed at every stage.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Aimee Shalan, Chair
On behalf of the British Palestinian Committee

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