

A PICKET LINE FOR PALESTINE

Jewish Socialist and retired lecturer Neil Rogall explains why it's right to boycott Israel

It is both the best and the worst of times for Palestinians. Gaza has been under siege for twelve years, with two million Palestinians effectively living in a giant concentration camp. West Bank Palestinians are walled in, encircled by ever-expanding settlements, negotiating military checkpoints to get to work or school every day, facing arbitrary arrest.

In Jerusalem, the state is demolishing homes, evicting Palestinians and giving their properties to settlers. In Israel, they are third-class citizens

facing daily discrimination. Their supposed friends, the Arab states, are moving more and more towards normalising their relationship with Israel in the wake of the Arab Spring's defeat.

In the West Bank, the Palestinian authority is corrupt, hostile to any political activity from below and essentially works for their colonial masters, even running some Israeli prisons. And in the White House is Trump, the most pro-Israel president ever. But alongside the horror, support for the Palestinians has been growing internationally. This is most apparent in the US where we have seen the growing 'Students for Justice in Palestine' movement on campuses, the election to Congress of pro-Palestine Democrats and a growing hostility to Israel amongst American Jewish young people.

At the heart of international solidarity has been the growth of the BDS (Boycott, Disinvestment, Sanctions) movement calling for the Right of Return of Palestinian refugees, the end to occupation



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and the wall in the West Bank, and for full equality of Palestinians living in Israel. The BDS call rose out of Palestinian civil society, inspired by the successful boycott of apartheid in South Africa.

Israel is now openly declaring itself an apartheid state with the racist 'nation-state law' in the Knesset which declares Israel 'as the nation state of the Jewish people'. This means the 20% of the Israeli population that are Palestinian are now constitutionally inferior. And this racist rule at home goes hand in hand with the country's alliance with far-right governments, parties and movements abroad who see in Israel the model of an ethnically exclusive state that they dream of.

BDS terrifies the Israeli state. It is only in this context that we can understand the growing witch-hunt against Palestine campaigners in the UK. Meanwhile the hollowness of calls for a two-state solution has become clearer. With 800,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem the idea that Israel will willingly withdraw is absurd.

More and more the call for a democratic state in the whole of 'mandate Palestine' with equal rights for all its citizens seems to be the only solution. The forces

to achieve this have suffered a grave setback with the defeat of the Arab Spring, although current events in Algeria spark new hope. This makes it even more important that we campaign for Palestinian rights here in the UK. Put simply, Palestine has 'an international picket line around it'.

ISRAEL THE MAKING OF A RACIST STATE



An **rs21** pamphlet by Neil Rogall

Neil's pamphlet
Israel: The making of a racist state is available to order now from www.rs21.org.uk/rs21-pamphlet-israel-the-making-of-a-racist-state/