**Blatant impunity**

Marjorie Cohn

Wednesday, May 08, 2024

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement was launched in 2005 by 170 Palestinian civil society organizations who described BDS as “non-violent punitive measures” to last until Israel fully complies with international law. That means Israel must (1) end its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantle its barrier wall; (2) recognize the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and (3) respect, protect and promote the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their land as mandated by UN General Assembly Resolution 194.

Boycotts are the withdrawal of support for Israel, and Israeli and international companies that are violating Palestinian human rights, including Israeli academic, cultural and sporting institutions. Divestment occurs when universities, churches, banks, pension funds and local councils withdraw their investments from all Israeli and international companies complicit in the violation of Palestinian rights. Sanctions campaigns pressure governments to stop military trade and free-trade agreements and urge them to expel Israel from international fora.

“A particularly important source of Palestinian hope is the growing impact of the Palestinian-led nonviolent BDS movement,” according to Omar Barghouti, co-founder of BDS. It “aims at ending Israel’s regime of military occupation, settler-colonialism, and apartheid and defending the right of Palestinian refugees to return home.”

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has called the BDS movement an existential threat to Israel – an absurd claim in light of Israel’s arsenal of nuclear weapons.

The BDS movement is modeled largely on the boycott that helped end apartheid in South Africa. As confirmed by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the Israeli human rights organization B’Tselem, Israel also maintains a system of apartheid. Israel’s system is “an even more extreme form of the apartheid” than South Africa’s was, the South African ambassador told the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at the recent hearing on the legality of the Israeli occupation. The US has a long, proud history of boycotts – from the civil rights bus boycott to the United Farm Workers Union’s grape boycott. But at the behest of Zionists, anti-boycott legislation has been passed at the federal and state levels to prevent the American people from exercising their First Amendment right to boycott.

“The genocide underway in Gaza is the result of decades of impunity and inaction. Ending Israel’s impunity is a moral, political and legal imperative,” Palestine’s Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki told the ICJ. “Successive Israeli governments have given the Palestinian people only three options: displacement, subjugation or death; these are the choices, ethnic cleansing, apartheid or genocide.”

“Israel restricts every aspect of Palestinian life, from birth to death, resulting in manifest human rights violations and an overt system of repression and persecution,” al-Maliki said. “Through indiscriminate killing, summary execution, mass arbitrary arrest, torture, forced displacement, settler violence, movement restrictions and blockades, Israel subjects Palestinians to inhumane life conditions and untold human indignities, affecting the fate of every man, woman and child under its control.”

The Israeli military is poised to compound its genocidal campaign by ethnically cleansing 1.4 million people sheltering in Rafah, who have nowhere to flee. The violence in Gaza did not start on October 7, 2023, with the killing of some 1,200 Israelis by Hamas. It is the continuation of Israel’s brutal Nakba (Arabic for “catastrophe”) that began 75 years ago.

The Ambassador of Belize told the ICJ, “No state reserves to itself the right to systematically violate the rights of a people to self-determination – except Israel. No state seeks to justify the indefinite occupation of another’s territory – except Israel. No state commits annexation and apartheid with impunity, except – it seems – Israel.” He said that “Israel must not be allowed such blatant impunity.”

Excerpted: ‘Students Demanding Divestment: You’re on the Right Side of History’. Courtesy: Commondreams.org