

## **354 European human rights organisations, church groups, trade unions and political parties call on the EU to support their right to boycott**

<http://www.eccpalestine.org/352-european-human-rights-organisations-church-group-trade-unions-and-political-parties-call-on-the-eu-to-support-their-right-to-bds/>

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More than 300 human rights and aid organisations, church groups, trade unions and political parties from across Europe have called on the EU to uphold its legal responsibilities and hold Israel accountable for its violations of international law and to defend the right of individuals and institutions to take part in the **Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement** for justice and equality.

Signatories to the letter called on the EU commission to “introduce the human rights guidelines guaranteeing freedom of speech and right to boycott and to use all other means you have in your disposal to support European citizens in their struggle to uphold basic human rights.”

Having failed to stop the growth of the BDS movement movement, Israel has **launched an unprecedented attack against the BDS movement** for Palestinian freedom, justice and equality.

The 354 strong list of signatories includes: Transform! Europe – a European network of 28 European organizations from 19 countries, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, The Norwegian United Federation of Trade Unions, Parti de Gauche in France, Podemos in Spain, Norwegian Church Aid, the Flemish branch of Oxfam in Belgium, major Belgian NGO coalition CNCD 11.11.11, Defence for Children in Belgium, Greenpeace in Germany, the international Catholic peace movement Pax Christi International in Belgium and major French Catholic NGO Terre Solidaire. See here for letter and **full list of signatories**.

At Israel’s request, European governments including the UK and France are **introducing anti-democratic legislation** and taking other repressive measures to undermine the BDS movement. In France, one activist was arrested simply for wearing a BDS t-shirt.

The EU envoy to Israel was **criticised recently** for participating in an anti-BDS conference in Jerusalem at which Israeli government ministers threatened BDS activists.

Israel has also imposed an effective travel ban on BDS movement co-founder Omar Barghouti, following thinly-veiled threats of physical violence against him by Israeli government ministers that prompted **Amnesty International to express concern** “for the safety and liberty of Palestinian human rights defender Omar Barghouti”.

Israeli state repression against human rights defenders and the BDS movement is designed to shield it from being held accountable for its violations of international law. Israel has **openly boasted** that it is spying on international BDS activists.

**Riya Hassan, Europe Campaigns Officer for the Palestinian BDS National Committee**, the broadest coalition of Palestinian organisations that leads and

supports the BDS movement, said:

“Rather than helping Israel to repress the BDS movement, it is time for the EU to meet its obligations under international law and hold Israel accountable for its violations of international law. The EU must uphold the right of European, Palestinian and Israeli citizens to uphold human rights and take part in the nonviolent BDS movement.”

**Aneta Jerska, the coordinator of the European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine (ECCP)**, one of the organisations that has signed the statement, said:

“It is empowering to see so many European civil society organisations and representative bodies publicly declaring their support for the right to participate in the BDS movement that aims to hold Israel accountable for its violations of international law and human rights.

“This is a powerful sign that European public opinion is increasingly viewing BDS as an act of free speech. We will continue to fight to bring an end to Israel’s unjust system of oppression over the Palestinian people.”