

# ZIINESS

Unabashedly Progressive, Unapologetically Zionist.



## WHAT IS THE BDS (BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT AND SANCTIONS) MOVEMENT?

- The BDS Movement originally called for targeted economic discrimination against Israeli businesses and businesses doing business in Israel or with Israelis. **While its founders at one point claimed that it was about “criticism of Israeli policy” and its goal was to end Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, its founders are now clear the aim of BDS is to isolate, delegitimize and ultimately destroy the Jewish state entirely.**
- Realizing that the economic goals of BDS were unlikely to seriously harm the state of Israel, BDS expanded its goals to call for an “academic and cultural boycott” which targets Israeli and Zionist professors, academics, artists, musicians and wages campaigns calling them, as individuals, human rights abusers.
- BDS also calls for adoption of a policy called “anti-normalization,” which requires the disruption and silencing of any viewpoint relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that recognizes the actual existence of the state of Israel, arguing that open dialogue “normalizes” Israel’s existence. “Anti-normalization” is what plays out on American college campuses, and ultimately, it is not Israelis, but American Jews, who are the targets. The application of “anti-normalization” serves to bar Israelis, the vast majority of Jews, and anyone else who acknowledges Israel’s actual existence from publicly expressing themselves on any issue, including domestic progressive issues like women’s reproductive freedom, racial justice and LGBTQ equality. BDS activists shame American Jews for their Zionist identities (meaning they inherently believe in the movement for Jewish collective liberation) and for their support of Israel’s existence, which unfortunately has led many American Jews to remove themselves from the progressive movement entirely—at the expense of our progressive Jewish ideals.
- **BDS ultimately targets and harms American Jews far more than it hurts Israel’s economy.**



# ZIONESS



## WHY IS BDS ANTISEMITIC?

- **Targeting or discriminating against a person or company because of its ethnicity or national origin is racist, and is illegal under New York's Human Rights Law.** We appropriately call it racist when Chinese Americans are marginalized and attacked because of the wrongdoing of the Chinese government vis-a-vis Covid, and we would vociferously fight against a proposed boycott of a local Chinese restaurant to protest the Chinese government's treatment of the Uyghurs. No American of conscience would refuse to purchase from an African American retailer to declare their condemnation of the government of Sudan. By the same token, it is fundamentally anti-Jewish to hold Jewish Americans — even Israeli Americans — accountable for the wrongdoing, real or perceived, of a foreign government.
- BDS is not the first iteration of an antisemitic attempt to economically starve Jewish businesses to harm Jewish people:
  - In 1933, less than 3 months after coming to power in Germany, Nazi leadership implemented a boycott of Jewish businesses, claiming that the Jews were spreading "atrocious stories" to damage Germany's reputation to the world. Nazi Storm Troopers stood in front of Jewish-owned stores holding signs and shouting slogans such as "Don't Buy from Jews" and "The Jews Are Our Misfortune." This was the beginning of the campaign against Jews that ended with the Holocaust.
  - In 1945, the Arab League conceived of and implemented the Arab League Boycott — 3 years prior to Israel's founding in 1948 — in an attempt to financially undermine Jewish state-building and deter Jewish immigration during the British Mandate. While BDS activists often claim they are fighting against Israeli occupation which began after the 1967 "Six-Day War," in reality, these boycotts began 3 years before Israel was even recognized as a member of the international community.
  - The modern BDS movement is a vengeful derivative of the Arab League boycott, except that BDS claims to be grassroots while the Arab League Boycott is implemented by sovereign governments. Regardless, the two campaigns are synonymous in their motives and goals: they incite economic warfare against a principal U.S. ally, Israel, home to more than half of the Jewish people in the entire world, in an attempt to destroy the world's only Jewish state.
- **While it cannot be said that every BDS advocate feels hatred for Jews, the movement is inherently and undeniably antisemitic in that its goal is to return the Jewish people to a state of total systemic powerlessness (which has led to unimaginable bloodshed throughout history).** BDS is not pro-Palestinian, it is only anti-Israel. Liberation for both Jews and Palestinians is not, and simply cannot be, a zero-sum game, yet BDS demands adherence to a dehumanizing binary.



# ZIONESS



## IS BDS REALLY PRO-PALESTINIAN?

- **BDS groups are not engaged in humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, nor are they invested in the future of a Palestinian economy, infrastructure, or functioning representative government.** They demonize Israel and anyone who recognizes its legitimate existence, but they do not do anything to affirmatively aid the Palestinians, who are indeed oppressed. Real efforts to effectively support and uplift the Palestinian people are necessary, but BDS does not even claim to be such an effort.
- While largely unsuccessful from an economic standpoint, on rare occasions, BDS efforts have led to the relocation of Israeli companies operating in the West Bank that employed Palestinians and paid them better wages than the Palestinian economy could sustain. For example, when the Israeli company SodaStream, which was operating in the West Bank, faced an international boycott campaign, it closed its West Bank operations and moved to the Negev Desert within Israel proper. Because of security checkpoints and the challenges of receiving Israeli work permits, 500 Palestinian SodaStream employees lost their jobs, while BDS activists celebrated.
- According to BDS, it is impossible to hold the view that **both** the Jewish and Palestinian people are entitled to liberation and sovereignty, and one must pick a side. This is wrong. **Supporting the collective liberation of the Jewish people in the land of Israel is not mutually exclusive with supporting Palestinian liberation in a state alongside it. In fact, this was the offer of the international community in the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan, which would have created two independent states. While the Jews accepted this resolution, Palestinian leadership did not.** 72 years later, the BDS Movement continues to deny that the Jewish people have any claim whatsoever to a state in the region, and this refusal to accept the reality of Israel's existence harms the millions of Palestinians who want to live peaceful, prosperous lives, not live in perpetual war.
- Given recent developments in the Middle East, with Israel joining warm peace treaties with several Arab and Muslim nations including the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco, it has become exceedingly clear that demonizing Jews and Israel, including through “anti-normalization,” is not effective in the pursuit of peace or coexistence.
- Coexistence is the only hope for the human dignity, self-determination and political independence of both peoples, which requires supporting the liberation of both Jews and Palestinians — and rejecting BDS.



## DOES ANTI-BDS LEGISLATION VIOLATE FREE SPEECH?

- No politician or American of conscience should support the criminalization of speech or advocacy, which is quintessentially protected under the First Amendment and Article I Section 8 of the New York Constitution. **Despite often disingenuous messaging, opposing BDS is not “criminalizing speech or advocacy.”** Elected leaders have every right to exercise their own First Amendment-protected speech and declare their opposition to BDS, or any other idea or agenda they find offensive.
- **While advocacy, including independent consumer purchasing decisions, is protected speech, commercial discrimination is conduct which can and often is regulated.** Just as public officials can choose not to invest public funds in gun manufacturing or tobacco production, they can choose not to invest in funds that single out and discriminate against the Jewish state, by engaging in a commercial boycott (which is conduct, not speech).
- The difference between speech/advocacy and conduct is straightforward: The CEO of a Fortune 500 company can go on CNBC and declare proudly that she encourages all the viewers to make personal consumer decisions not to buy Israeli goods. **She cannot then walk into her boardroom and commit to a corporate policy that discriminates against Israeli or Jewish businesses, based on the national origin, ethnicity, or religion of the company’s leadership.**
- State anti-BDS laws are constitutional because—and only to the extent that—they apply exclusively to conduct, not speech. Most pieces of anti-BDS legislation adopted by states around the country are perfectly constitutional, as they prohibit only discriminatory commercial conduct and not individual consumer decision-making or advocacy.
- Unfortunately, **Governor Cuomo’s Anti-BDS Executive Order is plainly unconstitutional** because it says “BDS activities targeting Israel’ means to engage in any activity, **or promote others to engage in any activity**, that is intended to penalize, inflict economic harm on, or otherwise limit commercial relations with Israel...”
  - Regardless of the intent in signing or implementing the EO, using the word “promotion” is a straightforward facial violation of the First Amendment. The EO could chill free speech by making individuals or corporations afraid that if they advocated for or promoted BDS, they would be ineligible for state investments.
  - The constitutional way to accomplish the EO’s laudable goal is to make clear that advocacy will never be punishable under the EO and that even individuals or corporations clearly advocating for BDS will never be blacklisted unless they also engage in prohibited commercial conduct.



## OPPOSING BDS AND WORKING WITH ISRAEL AND ISRAELI COMPANIES IS GOOD FOR NYC

- The BDS Movement has had almost zero impact in harming Israel's economy. NY — Israel trade and collaboration is important and hugely benefits our city, our state, and our country. BDS does, however, have an effect on Jewish people, which is why New York's Jewish community overwhelmingly opposes it as anti-Jewish and discriminatory. This is reason alone to oppose it.
- According to an independent study conducted by Stax Inc., and reported in the [New York - Israel Economic Impact Report](#), Israeli-founded businesses contribute significantly to the New York State economy and have helped New York establish itself as a global innovation leader. The study finds that Israeli enterprises generate substantial revenue, draw capital investment, and create jobs throughout the state. Specifically, the Impact Report reveals that:
  - **Israeli-founded companies accounted for more than 20% of the total capital raised in New York State in 2016**
  - **5 Israeli-founded startups valued at \$1 billion and above are based in NYC (Compass, Lemonade, Payoneer, Taboola, and WeWork)**
  - **In 2018, Israeli-founded companies generated \$18.6 billion in the New York local economy**
  - **24,850 New York jobs were created by Israeli businesses directly, plus 27,502 indirect jobs based on the additional support required to service the Israeli companies**
  - **506 Israeli-founded businesses call New York home**
- In 2012, a joint academic venture was launched between Cornell and Technion—Israel Institute of Technology on Roosevelt Island in Manhattan. Cornell Tech is a technology, business, law, and design campus which brings national and international thought leaders from academia, business, government, science, medicine and technology to explore and create groundbreaking solutions to the most vexing challenges facing New York City and the world. The work happening at Cornell Tech is astonishing. ([Read More.](#))
- Five Israeli energy companies are partnering with New York state to support the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, the most aggressive climate program in the nation, which is driving the state to a carbon-neutral economy by 2050. ([Read more.](#))
- The administration and several major New York health care institutions have signed a series of agreements with Israeli entities in the UAV/drones, transportation, energy, cybersecurity, financial technology and health care industries. ([Read more.](#))



## OPPOSING BDS IS A BIPARTISAN CONSENSUS, INCLUDING AMONG MANY PROGRESSIVE LEADERS

- By working to delegitimize Israel and suggest that, because of the wrongdoing (real or perceived) of its government, the state should cease to exist, the BDS movement and its supporters regularly espouse the dismantling of the world's only Jewish state. This is why, after "Squad" member **Rep. Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts voted to support an anti-BDS resolution in Congress, she tweeted, "What I heard resounding in [my] community was that voting yes on this resolution affirmed to my constituents raised in the Jewish faith Israel's right to exist, a view I share as a supporter of a two state solution."**
- A central tenet of the BDS movement is its commitment to "anti-normalization": a refusal to engage with individuals who recognize the actual existence of the Jewish state of Israel—including about 95% of American Jews. **This is why rising progressive star, Rep. Ritchie Torres, the first openly gay Afro-Latino to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives, tweeted about those who "decline[] to affirm that the state of Israel should exist: 'Insane' is the word that comes to mind."** Anti-normalization requires people to either ignore, or verbally attack those who recognize Israel, even if they are highly critical of the Israeli government. This refusal to engage with Jews on any issue is patently antisemitic, which is why Rep. Torres calls BDS "the definition of discrimination."
- **Reverend Raphael Warnock, national progressive leader, pastor of the iconic Ebenezer Baptist Church, and first Black Senator from the state of Georgia, recently wrote that he "firmly oppose[s] the global BDS movement, its anti-Semitic overtones and its refusal to acknowledge Israel's right to exist."** He declared that the Black and Jewish communities are united because of "our respective histories of oppression and our shared perspective against bigotry, racism and xenophobia," and quoted Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in saying that "Israel's right to exist as a state in security is incontestable."
- **New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio says supporting Israel "is a matter of being consistent with progressive values" and "an understanding that we must always learn the painful lessons of history and do something about it."** He rightfully declared that the BDS movement "seeks to undermine the economy of the State of Israel and makes it harder for Israel to exist - therefore, renouncing the very notion that the Jewish people need a homeland in a still dangerous and unsettled world ... We in the United States, or in any nation, you can disagree with a particular government's policy at that moment in time, but that doesn't mean that you don't believe in that nation, or its right to exist, or its founding ideals."
- **U.S. House of Representatives Democratic Caucus Chair Hakeem Jeffries did not mince his words when describing the caucus's fervent opposition to BDS:** "As it relates to BDS, we spoke pretty clearly with a resolution that both condemned the BDS movement and articulated our strong support for a robust two-state solution where Israel and the Palestinians can live side by side in peace and prosperity. We passed that resolution with only 17 members of the House voting against it...that's pretty much an overwhelming repudiation of the BDS movement."