

Joint Statement on Anti-Defamation Leagues “Top 10” List

On October 14th, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) named Students for Justice in Palestine on its list of the “Top 10 Anti-Israel Groups in America,” claiming that “SJP chapters regularly organize activities presenting a biased view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including mock ‘apartheid walls’ and ‘checkpoint’ displays.” As members of several student groups working for justice in Palestine, we affirmatively state that the ADL’s characterization of our campus educational efforts and activism about Israeli injustices against Palestinians as “biased” is a disingenuous and misguided attempt to vilify students that criticize Israel’s occupation, which denies Palestinian human rights and self-determination. In this statement, we clarify our principles and invite the ADL to reconsider its categorical silence on egregious Israeli human rights violations by joining the movement for freedom, equality, and justice in Palestine.

Students for Justice in Palestine groups have developed independently as students across the country seek to raise awareness about the Israeli government’s violations of human rights. Our groups represent constituencies of students, faculty, staff and community members from diverse ethnic, religious, national, and political backgrounds including many Jewish and Israeli members who have been continually ostracized by organizations like the ADL. Our organizations work independently of one another, but collectively, we are united in our belief in justice, freedom and human rights for the Palestinian people. We are unified by our purpose of confronting these wrongs that cause so much death and suffering.

The ADL shields Israeli policy by invoking the “complexity of the conflict” without ever illuminating it. As students we have a definite responsibility to use the tools of knowledge at our disposal to penetrate that complexity; “to speak truth and to expose lies” and “to analyze actions according to their causes and motives and often hidden intentions,” to quote social critic Noam Chomsky.¹ Complexity can never be an excuse for complacency. In that vein, groups like the United Nations Human Rights Council, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International have affirmed in painstaking detail Israel’s deplorable human rights record and systematic intransigency. By educating ourselves, our campuses and our communities about what the Israeli government inflicts upon the Palestinian people within the occupied territories, inside Israel, and beyond, we can begin to identify the problems that cause this injustice. United States foreign aid to Israel – which numbers in the billions every year – is chief amongst the issues enabling Israel’s continued occupation and racism. As students in America, therefore, our duty is three-fold: to apply our academic rigor to learn the truth, to educate and hold our communities accountable for support given in our name, and to lobby our government to end its diplomatic cover for Israeli injustice.

Palestinians have the right to fight for their freedom and to resist the occupation and colonization of their indigenous lands. Therefore, we are committed to non-violent activism that promotes education, civic and political organization to promote the Palestinian struggle for freedom. Many of our organizations have responded favorably to a 2005 call from over 170 civil society organizations within Palestine for activists to stand in solidarity by promoting the Boycott,

¹ Noam Chomsky, “The Responsibility of Intellectuals,” The New York Review of Books, February 23, 1967 available at <http://www.chomsky.info/articles/19670223.htm>

Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. We see this method as an important and practical tool that students can use to express solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for freedom. We also believe it illuminates the behind-the-scenes relationships, economic and otherwise, that enable Israel's behavior and that can be used to urge our communities to be accountable to the ways in which they may unwittingly support the occupation.

We are inspired by the international movement against South African apartheid—which successfully ended only 16 years ago—and we aim similarly to bring an end to the system imposed by Israel on the Palestinians. As in the South African movement, the BDS call has been endorsed by many conscientious citizens of Israel, including Arabs and Jews, as well as numerous social justice and peace activists around the world. Among the luminaries supporting the call for solidarity are Nobel Peace laureates like Archbishop Desmond Tutu, co-drafter of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights Stéphane Hessel, distinguished professors, jurists, authors, intellectuals, and artists.

Ultimately, we locate ourselves in a legacy of social justice movements working at the grassroots for a free and just world. The ADL itself started this way a century ago. We suspect that the ADL, high on its perch among the political elite, has lost sight of its founding values. It opposed the South African anti-apartheid movement and engaged in massive spying on private American citizens. It recently abandoned its belief in religious freedom by condemning Muslim Americans hoping to build an Islamic community center in lower Manhattan. The same day it attacked SJP, the ADL honored Rupert Murdoch, the media mogul who owns Fox News Network, one of the most despicable purveyors of hatred against Muslim, Arab, Latino, Black, and queer communities in our time. These are not the actions of an organization with a moral compass that points in the direction of justice.

We will continue to work for a just peace where Palestinians are free in their homeland and equals to Jewish Israelis. We invite the ADL to reflect and to choose to build this world, rather than to stop it.

Students For Justice in Palestine Group Signatories

Arizona State University, Students for Justice in Palestine
Bard College, International Solidarity Movement
Bates College, Students for Justice in Palestine
Benedictine University, Students for Justice in Palestine
Boston University, Students for Justice in Palestine
Brandeis University, Students for Justice in Palestine
Brown University, Students for Justice in Palestine
Clark University, Students for Palestinian Rights
Columbia University, Students for Justice in Palestine
Cornell University, United for Peace and Justice in Palestine
DePaul University, Students for Justice in Palestine
Florida International University, Miami, Students for Justice in Palestine
George Washington University, Students for Justice in Palestine
Hampshire College- Students for Justice in Palestine

Harvard College- Palestine Solidarity Committee
Harvard University- Alliance for Justice in the Middle East
Illinois Institute of Technology- Students for Justice in Palestine
Loyola University Chicago- Middle East Student Association (MESA)
Macalester College- Macalester Students United for Palestinian
Equal Rights
Massachusetts Institute of Technology- Palestine@MIT
New York University- Students for Justice in Palestine
Northeastern Illinois University- Students for Justice in Palestine
Northeastern University- Students for Justice in Palestine
Northwestern University- Students for Justice in Palestine
Ohio State University- Committee for Justice in Palestine
Purdue University- Students for Justice in Palestine
Rutgers University- BAKA: Students United for Middle Eastern
Justice
School of the Art Institute of Chicago- Students for Justice in Palestine
St. Xavier University- Students for Justice in Palestine
Suffolk University- Students for Justice in Palestine
Temple University- Students for Justice in Palestine
Texas Christian University- Students for Justice in Palestine
The Pennsylvania State University- University Park, Students for Justice in Palestine
Tufts University- Students for Justice in Palestine
University of Arizona- Students for Justice in Palestine
University of California, Berkeley- Students for Justice in Palestine
University of California, Davis- Students for Justice in Palestine
University of California, Hastings College of the Law- La Raza Law Students Association
University of California, Hastings College of the Law- Middle Eastern Law Students Association
University of California, Los Angeles School of Law- Law Students for Justice in Palestine
University of California, Los Angeles- Students for Justice in Palestine
University of California, Riverside- Students for Justice in Palestine
University of California, San Diego- Students for Justice in Palestine
University of California, Santa Barbara- Students for Justice in Palestine
University of California, Santa Cruz- Committee for Justice in Palestine
University of Chicago- Students for Justice in Palestine
University of Connecticut- International Relations Association
University of Florida, Gainesville- Students for Justice in Palestine
University of Florida- Students for Justice in Palestine
University of Illinois at Chicago- Students for Justice in Palestine
University of Maryland, Baltimore- Students for Justice in Palestine
University of Massachusetts, Boston- Students for Justice in Palestine
University of Michigan- Students Allied for Freedom and Equality
University of Pittsburgh- Students for Justice in Palestine
University of South Florida- Students for Justice in Palestine
University of Southern California- Students for Justice in Palestine
University of Southern California- Students for Justice in Palestine
University of Texas, Austin- Palestine Solidarity Committee

University of Washington, Seattle- Students for Justice in Palestine
Wellesley College- Justice for Palestine
Yale University- Students for Justice in Palestine