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Human rights situation in Palestine and other
occupied Arab territories

Written statement* submitted by Amuta for NGO Responsibility, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[30 May 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Amuta for NGO Responsibility Statement on Immoral Campaign to Label BDS Advocates as Human Rights Defenders

Leaders of the BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions) campaign against Israel have launched an appeal to urge the members of the Human Rights Council and officials at the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights to recognize supporters of these campaigns as “human rights defenders” and to intervene with governments that are attempting to prevent the spread of BDS.

As members of Israeli civil society, we implore the Council to reject this hateful message. Contrary to the rhetoric of human rights and international law, BDS is code for political warfare aimed at the elimination of the State of Israel and obstructing peace and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. Those who support BDS are not defenders of human rights; rather, they seek to undermine the right of the Jewish people to self-determination and the right of Israel to exist alongside all the other nation states of the world.

In other words, BDS is non-violent in name only, targeting the very existence of Israel and negating Israeli and Jewish human rights. Leading BDS activists have acknowledged this:

“BDS does mean the end of the Jewish state... Ending the occupation doesn’t mean anything if it doesn’t mean upending the Jewish state itself.” (Ahmed Moor, leading BDS activist in the U.S.)

“Definitely, most definitely we oppose a Jewish state in any part of Palestine. No Palestinian, rational Palestinian, not a sell-out Palestinian, will ever accept a Jewish state in Palestine.” (Omar Barghouti, Founder, Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel)

“We are witnessing the rapid demise of Zionism, and nothing can be done to save it, for Zionism is intent on killing itself. I, for one, support euthanasia.” (Barghouti)

In many respects, BDS is inseparable from antisemitism and often uses antisemitic slogans and tropes. Boycotts targeting Jews have long been a tactic for discriminating against, isolating, excluding, and harming Jews dating back to before the Middle Ages. Continuing that shameful history, today’s BDS campaigns also target Jews throughout the world with intimidation, censorship, boycotts, threats, and even violence, under a false pretext of opposition to Israeli policy.

As noted by Prof. David Feldman in his report to the British All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism, “‘Boycott movements become antisemitic when they discriminate against Jews’ and in some cases ‘may constitute unlawful discrimination – against Israelis – even when they are not antisemitic.’”

Indeed, because many states both in Europe and North America have observed the immoral and antisemitic nature of BDS, they have taken pro-active steps to prevent this form of illegal discrimination. This repudiation of BDS should also be seen an extension of their commitment to a two-state formula recognizing the right of self-determination for both Israelis and Palestinians, whereby the difficult questions of borders, refugees, and holy sites (to name a few) will be determined by Israelis and Palestinians together with the guidance and encouragement of the international community.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is both highly complex and intensely sensitive and must be solved via direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. We urge the Council not give voice to further rejectionism and politicization of human rights, which further entrench and fuel the conflict.
