

February 25, 2015

### France Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Report

- A wide network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) companies are active in the promotion of boycott, divestments, and sanctions (BDS) campaigns against Israel. These include Association France Palestine Solidarité (AFPS), the “Plateforme des ONG Françaises pour la Palestine” and its affiliated organizations Fédération Internationale des Droits de l’Homme (FIDH) and CCFD-Terre Solidaire, the European Coordination Committee and Associations for Palestine, as well as CSR companies Novethic and Ethix SRI.
- BDS actors advance an anti-Israel agenda, through divestment campaigns on both national and local levels, as well as “lawfare.” Current divestment campaigns focus on labeling products produced beyond the 1949 Armistice Line.
- NGOs promote invented interpretations of international law that falsely define business activities beyond the 1949 Armistice Line as violations of international law, a claim that has failed in every court case brought in Europe and North America. For example, AFPS sued Veolia and Alstom for alleged violations of international humanitarian law because of their involvement in the Jerusalem Light Rail train project. A French court confirmed that only states, and not corporations, are subject to international humanitarian law court, and noted further that the Jerusalem Light Rail is not illegal because occupation law allows the building of transportation infrastructure.

### Divestment campaigns against Veolia and Alstom

- Veolia and Alstom are two French companies involved in the construction of Jerusalem’s Light Rail train, which serves both Jewish- and Arab-majority neighborhoods. A network of political NGOs has alleged that the train project violates international humanitarian law and has pursued a divestment campaign against the private companies involved.
- BDS campaigners falsely claim that corporations operating over the 1949 Armistice Line violate international law. However, this claim has failed in every court case brought in Europe and North America. All courts that have examined this issue have ruled that only states, and not corporations, are subject to international humanitarian law (IHL) and there is no international rule whatsoever imposing liability on corporations for allegedly aiding and abetting claimed violations of a state. In addition, a French court noted that building the Jerusalem Light Rail was not illegal because occupation law allows for the governance of occupied territory and includes the building of transportation infrastructure (see below for additional details).
- The divestment campaign against Veolia and Alstom was initiated by the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BDN), which emerged in 2005 as a main anti-Israeli BDS actor.
  - In 2005, BDN launched the campaign through distribution of a “fact sheet” that encouraged a global boycott of the companies.
  - In 2006, Amnesty International-France reportedly lobbied Veolia to divest from Israel.
  - In a 2008 interview given to anti-Israel activist Adri Nieuwhof, Ethix SRI (Sweden) advisors Reinhilde Weidacher and Damine Fruchart, declared that Veolia’s activities in East Jerusalem amounted to a violation of international

- law. It is not clear which group brought in a Swedish company to consult on this issue.
- In 2009, BDN group member Civic Coalition for Defending Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem published a report on the Light Rail project. The publication, funded by Norwegian People's Aid and the Norwegian Representative Office to the Palestinian Authority, falsely deemed the project as a means to “consolidat[e] Israeli control over occupied East Jerusalem” and “as a mode of settler infusion into occupied East Jerusalem.”
  - In 2007, the AFPS (Association France-Palestine Solidarité) and the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) filed a petition with the Tribunal of Nanterre against Veolia and Alstom for alleged violation of “public order.” In the petition, the two French companies were accused of violating international law for their involvement in the construction of the Light Rail train. The Tribunal of Nanterre dismissed the case in 2011, and the Versailles Court of Appeals upheld the decision in 2013.
  - The court ruled that the AFPS did not have standing to bring suit because it was not “defending a collective interest specific to its membership as distinct from the public interest of Palestinians in general.”
  - The court also noted that building the Jerusalem Light Rail was not illegal because occupation law allows for the governance of occupied territory and includes the building of transportation infrastructure. Finally, the court emphasized that the determination of the legality of a contract cannot be contingent on political considerations advanced by a third party.
  - Courts in France, Canada, and the UK have also explicitly found no international law prohibiting business operations over the 1949 armistice lines. The advertising board in the Netherlands also found that it was defamatory to claim a company selling goods or operating over armistice lines was acting “illegally” or in violation of international law.
- In November 2010, Veolia lost a contract to run a metro transportation system in Lille, France, following a BDS campaign by Association France-Palestine Solidarité Nord Pas-de-Calais, a local branch of the AFPS directed by Jean-Francois Larosiere.
  - In January 2013, Veolia lost a water system management contract with Rennes Municipality due to a BDS campaign by the Rennais France Palestine Solidarity Committee, a local branch of the AFPS, which lobbied the municipal council to divest from Veolia.
    - The Rennais Committee is a local “association of friendship” with the Palestinian people, which participated in the 2012 anti-Israel sports boycott and manages Palestinian “development projects” that are funded by the Rennes municipality. One such project funded “political prisoners” – the organization’s term for individuals convicted of crimes related to terrorism.

### **Product labeling campaigns**

- Several NGOs rely on distortions of international law to promote the claim that it is illegal and unethical to conduct business with Jews over the 1949 armistice lines. This has no foundation in international law and has been consistently denied by courts in several countries.
  - In 2012, FIDH (Fédération International des Droits de l’Homme) and CCFD-Terre Solidaire published a report “La Paix au Rabais: Comment l’Union européenne renforce les colonies israéliennes” (English version: “Trading away Peace”), with the

cooperation of Norwegian People's Aid and several Christian NGOs involved in European BDS campaigns, including Trócaire (Ireland), Diakonia (Sweden), and the Norwegian Church Aid.

- "Trading Away Peace" advances the BDS (boycotts, divestment, sanctions) agenda, by calling on the EU and national governments to wage political warfare through various forms of economic sanctions on Israel.
- As demonstrated by NGO Monitor research, the report relies on heavily biased and speculative arguments in order to demonize Israel. Furthermore, these NGOs do not campaign for divestment or boycotts against any other state that they accuse of violating human rights.
- Following a report from the NGO Who Profits, the pro-Palestinian "Plateform des ONG Françaises pour la Palestine" (the Platform) launched the campaign "Colonisation Illégale, Palestine en Danger" (Illegal Colonization, Palestine in Danger) to advocate for labeling products from the Israeli settlements and for divestment from Israeli institutions beyond the 1949 Armistice Line.
  - In 2012, the Platform published a report on settlement products, which advocated for labeling products made over the 1949 Armistice Line, prohibiting the import of Israeli goods that originate from those territories, and excluding Israeli companies that operate there from EU-Israel bilateral agreements.
  - In the same year, the Platform lobbied French Members of Parliament (MP) to advance the labeling campaign, and collected 55 MPs declarations in favor of excluding Israeli institutions beyond the 1949 Armistice Line from cooperation with France. The anti-Israeli NGO network also organized a petition for banning the import of settlement products.
  - In November 2013, the Platform, in cooperation with AFPS, invited Esti Micenmacher of Who Profits to give a series of speeches advocating for divestment from products allegedly linked to Israeli settlements. At the "Ethics and Development" conference, organized by the French association "Maison des Tiers-Mondes et de la Solidarité Internationale," Esti Micenmacher identified new possible targets for French divestment campaigns:
    - Orange, which bought the Israeli company Partner
    - The Sha'ar Hayarden project, which promotes economic cooperation between Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority.

#### **Campaigns against Dexia**

- In cooperation with the Belgian association Intal, AFPS participated in a Dexia shareholder protest that supported Dexia's divestment from Israeli companies.

#### **The NGO network and CSR companies behind BDS campaigns in France**

- AFPS (Association France Palestine Solidarité) is a French political NGO that promotes anti-Israel narratives, such as accusations of apartheid, discrimination, and massacres of Palestinians. AFPS promotes BDS and a Palestinian right of return, which would entail the destruction of Israel as a Jewish state. It also mobilizes local branches for activities and demonstrations against Israel.
  - AFPS organizes several events in cooperation with radical Palestinian and Israeli NGOs that promote BDS and an anti-Israel delegitimization agenda. These partners include: Adalah, Addameer, Alternative Information Center, Al-Mezan, Badil, Breaking the Silence, Combatants for Peace, Hamoked, Health Work Committees,

[Jewish Voice for Peace](#), [Ma'an Development Center](#), [Machsom Watch](#), [Miftah](#), [Mossawa](#), Palestine Monitor, [Palestine Center for Human Rights](#), [Palestinian Medical Relief Society](#), [Physicians for Human Rights-Israel](#), [Public Committee Against Torture](#), [ICHAD](#), [PNGO](#), and [Zochrot](#).

- These NGOs advance political warfare and legal attacks against Israel; many rely on substantial, direct or indirect funding by France and the EU.
- The “Plateforme des ONG Françaises pour la Palestine” is a network of French NGOs active in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Platform [lobbies](#) Members of European Parliament to [impose sanctions](#) on Israel. It offers several [biased resources](#) for advancing an anti-Israel agenda and [engages in BDS](#) campaigns.
  - Among the Platform’s [members](#): FIDH and CCDF-Terre Solidaire (discussed below) and Catholic organizations that delegitimize and demonize Israel by promoting a distorted religious interpretation of the conflict– [Pax Christi](#)-France, [Secours Catholique](#), and [Caritas](#) France.
  - Another member is the Comité de Bienfaisance et de Secours aux Palestiniens, which was [designated a terrorist organization](#) by Israel and the U.S. for its general support of Hamas and payments to [convicted terrorists](#).
- FIDH (Fédération Internationale des Droits de l’Homme) is a Paris-based federation of 141 NGOs from 92 countries with consultative status in several international bodies.
  - Palestinian partners include the radical NGOs Al-Mezan, [Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies](#), [Al-Haq](#), and the Palestinian Center for Human Rights. Israeli partners include Adalah, the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, and [B’Tselem](#).
  - In 2013, FIDH and Al-Haq [lobbied the Human Rights Council](#) and the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights to adopt measures against corporations that conduct business activities in settlements. The NGOs nonsensically argued that “corporations **are contributing to the violation of Palestinians human rights**, such as, *inter alia*, their rights to self-determination, equality and non-discrimination, freedom of movement, the right to food, water, housing, an adequate standard of living, access to natural resources and effective remedy” (emphasis in original).
  - Internationally, FIDH only promotes boycotts against Israel. In fact, FIDH expressed a [contrary opinion regarding calls to boycott the Olympic Games in Beijing](#) in protest against Chinese abuses in occupied Tibet. FIDH argued that an anti-Chinese boycott would cause an upsurge of nationalism. It instead favored a policy of dialogue with authorities.
  - In August 2014, FIDH published an [open letter against the Israeli military operation](#), launched in response to terror attacks from Gaza. FIDH calls boycott against Israeli products a legitimate response to Israel’s “murderous policies for the Palestinians and suicidal [policies] for the Israelis.”
- CCDF-Terre Solidaire is a French Catholic organization that purports to promote human rights and poverty reduction.
  - CCDF-Terre Solidaire collaborates with fringe Israeli NGOs such as [Sadaka-Reut](#), Zochrot, and Baladna, which encourage the Nakba narrative, Palestinian victimization, and Israeli guilt, as well as with Alternative Information Center and ICAHD that demonize Israel.
  - In August 2014, CCDF-Terre Solidaire published an [appeal](#) for the EU and their member states to divest from all settlements activities. In July 2014, CCDF-Terre Solidaire published “[European Measures against Israeli Occupation](#),” calling for

settlement product labeling and divestment from business and other activities with Israeli entities beyond the 1949 Armistice Line. The document also urges the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to endorse calls for divestment from settlement activities.

- Novethic is a French CSR center that conducts research on ethics and business. It also awards funds that meet Novethic's standards with a specific label meant to be "a reliable tool" for private investors "to invest their savings responsibly."
  - Novethic CEO Anne-Christine Husson-Traoré published an [article](#) praising the economic activism of Who Profits and its' advocacy work with Northern European responsible investors' organizations.
  - Novethic also published a [report](#) on the companies that were divested from Northern European Funds due to their involvement in settlements.
  - Husson-Traoré [advocates](#) for "economic activism" and labeling Israeli settlement products in France.