

February 25, 2015

### The Netherlands Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Report

- A wide network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is active in the promotion of boycott, divestments, and sanctions (BDS) campaigns against Israel under the guise of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). These organizations actively lobby trade unions, pension funds, businesses, and local government institutions to endorse BDS policies.
- Powerful promoters of BDS in the Netherlands include United Civilians for Peace (UCP), a platform established by the Dutch NGOs ICCO, Oxfam Novib, Pax Christi, and Cordaid; The Right's Forum, an organization comprised of influential individuals with connections to various biased and politicized NGOs; and ABVAKABO FNV, a Dutch trade union.
- BDS campaigns include pressuring Dutch water company Vitens to end cooperation with Israeli water company Mekorot, PGGM/PFZW pension fund to divest from Israeli banks, and Royal Haskoning to end involvement in the construction of a Jerusalem sewage treatment plant.
- Although the Dutch government [officially opposes BDS](#), it champions a "[discouragement policy](#)" on economic activities related to settlements. This policy has enabled NGOs to exploit false, distorted factual and legal claims in order to intimidate Dutch companies doing business in Israel. The Dutch government also funds Israeli and Palestinian NGOs that promote BDS.

#### BDS actors in the Netherlands

##### *Dutch NGOs*

- United Civilians for Peace ([UCP](#)) is a platform established by the Dutch NGOs [ICCO](#), [Oxfam Novib](#), IKV [Pax Christi](#), and [Cordaid](#). UCP is active in promoting BDS in the Netherlands, including pressuring Vitens' to terminate its cooperation with Mekorot (see below).
- [ICCO](#) is a Dutch church-based organization that [claims](#) to be an "independent civil society organizations that do[es] not hold on to any political party or political movement." In reality, ICCO [supports](#) politically motivated BDS initiatives as a supposedly "peaceful and legal way of trying to end [the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories]."
  - In 2012, [ICCO](#) received €82 million from the Dutch government, 84% of its budget for that year.
  - ICCO [has funded Electronic Intifada](#), an online media platform that promotes BDS through articles and commentary, as well as [Who Profits](#), an online database of targets for BDS activists.
- Oxfam Novib promotes an anti-Israel narrative in the Netherlands, and has "taken the lead in campaigning on Palestinian issues" within the Oxfam International network. Novib (Netherlands Organisation for International Assistance) was [founded](#) in 1956 and became affiliated with [Oxfam International](#) in 1994.
- IKV Pax Christi is the Dutch branch of [Pax Christi](#), a "global Catholic peace movement." IKV Pax Christi has been a major actor in BDS campaigns. It joined a coalition of 22 NGOs to help produce "[Trading Away Peace: How Europe Helps Sustain Illegal Israeli Settlements](#)" (October 2012), a publication that calls on EU and individual European governments to wage political warfare through various forms of economic sanctions on Israel.

- [Cordaid](#) (The Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid) is another NGO involved in “Trading Away Peace.” During a 2011 panel at the Dutch parliament, Cordaid’s Director René Grotenhuis [argued that BDS](#) is a defensible tactic because “it is important that people in Palestine look for ways to resist occupation, and it is a nonviolent way to do so.”
- A Different Jewish Voice (EAJG/Een Ander Joods Geluid) is a Dutch-Jewish organization that claims to promote public debate on Israel by openly supporting BDS. Its [2005](#) declaration calls to “mobilize for de-investments and boycotts.”
- [Stop de Bezetting](#) (Stop the Occupation) is a radical Dutch organization founded by anti-Israel activists dedicated to replacing Jewish Israel with a “multicultural” Palestinian state.
- [PalestineLink](#) claims to advocate for Palestinian national interests and lobby on behalf of Palestinians in Europe. [PalestineLink](#) activists have been involved in provocative anti-Israel campaigns including the 2011 “[Flytilla](#).”
- Workgroup Palestine Kairos Netherlands ([Werkgroep Keerpunt](#)) is a Christian organization of Dutch activists who promote [divestment from Israel](#).

#### *The Rights Forum*

- The [Rights Forum](#) is a Dutch organization established by former Dutch Prime Minister Andreas van Agt. It describes itself as a “[knowledge center on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict](#)” and as a network of previous ministers and jurists that are committed to a solution of the conflict based on international law.”
- Due to its strong network of former politicians, including key members of the Dutch government, the EU, and the International Court of Justice, The Rights Forum has been able to [directly influence](#) Dutch and European debate and policy.
- The Rights Forum claims it was created in response to the Netherlands’ supposed support for Israel’s alleged violations of international law and because it claims the Netherlands is the “birthplace and home of international law.”
- In advocating for a “just” solution to the conflict, The Rights Forum lobbies national and international frameworks with a one-sided Palestinian perspective. The organization solely blames Israel for the conflict.
- The group lobbies government officials, engages in “[fact-finding missions](#),” sends briefings to the Dutch parliament alleging Israeli violations of human rights, publishes highly misleading reports, and exploits its members’ political influence in order to manipulate Dutch and EU policy.
- The Rights Forum website contains highly-biased, inaccurate, and demonizing information on issues such as “[Palestinian water problems](#),” “[colonist violence](#),” [refugees](#).
- The group [supports BDS](#) campaigns: “Only with heavy economic and political pressure on Israel, also from Netherlands, will stir the Netanyahu government to strike its construction and expansion of settlements.”
- In a [report](#) detailing its May 2010 “fact-finding” mission, The Rights Forum alleges that Israel’s “continuing colonization” is “a major threat to the establishment of the two-state solution.” The report states that Israeli policies are “the main obstacle[s] to a peaceful solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict” and that relations with Hamas must be normalized.
- Individuals involved with The Rights Forum have connections to NGOs that support BDS:
  - [Board member](#) Mouin Rabbani was formerly employed by the Palestinian NGO [Al Haq](#), a global leader in anti-Israel “[lawfare](#)” and [BDS](#).
  - Director [Martin Siepermann](#) was a former Middle East project officer at [ICCO](#).

- Advisory board member [Jan Pronk](#) spoke at conferences organized by [Sabeel](#), an “ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians” that supports a “one state solution” to eliminate Israel as a Jewish state. Pronk has publicly [supported](#) the Kairos Palestine [Document](#), which calls for BDS and denies the Jewish historical connection to Israel.
- Hans van den Broek, former Foreign Minister of the Netherlands and member of The Rights Forum advisory board, [wrote](#) the introduction to “[Trading Away Peace.](#)”

#### *ABVAKABO FNV Trade Union*

- ABVAKABO is an affiliate of FNV (Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging), a federation of trade unions in the Netherlands. ABVAKABO, which represents civil servant, healthcare, and energy sectors, has been involved in various BDS-related activities. ABVAKABO FNV sponsors a “[Palestinian Working Group](#),” which aims to promote Palestinian solidarity within the unions.
- In 2013, ABVAKABO FNV organized a conference, together with [Cordaid](#), A Different Jewish Voice, PalestineLink, and Workgroup Palestine Kairos Netherlands.
  - According to a BDS Movement [report](#), the purpose of the conference was “to generate additional momentum for the successful and growing Dutch and European movement for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it agrees to abide by international law.”
  - Conference speakers included Rene Grotenhuis (former director of Cordaid), Rafeef Ziadah (Palestine Trade Union Coalition for BDS), and Cees Flinterman ([member](#) of the ethical board of PFZW pension fund and The Rights Forum [board member](#)).

#### **Dutch government funding to Palestinian NGOs promoting BDS**

- Dutch government funding for BDS is channeled through the [Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Secretariat](#), which is managed in part by the Institute of Law at Birzeit University (formerly through the [NGO Development Center](#) in Ramallah), and through Dutch aid organizations ICCO and Oxfam Novib.
- At least nine Dutch-funded Palestinian NGOs endorsed the 2005 “[Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS](#),” which called for “the world to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era.”
- [Dutch-funded](#) NGOs involved in lobbying Dutch officials and organizations as part of their BDS campaigns include [Palestinian Center for Human Rights](#) (PCHR), [Al Haq](#), [Addameer](#), [Al Mezan Center for Human rights](#), [Women’s Centre for Legal Aid](#), and [DCI-Palestine Section](#).

#### **Mekorot boycott**

- On December 10, 2013, Vitens, a major Dutch water company, [terminated](#) ties with Israeli water company Mekorot. Mekorot was targeted for BDS amid [false allegations](#) that Israel steals water from Palestinians. In reality, Mekorot operates in [accordance](#) with the water agreement stipulated by the 1995 Oslo Accords.
- Mekorot is part of the “Dutch-Israel Cooperation Forum” established to boost economic activities between Dutch and Israeli businesses. The Dutch Government [claimed](#) not to have advised Vitens to sever ties with Mekorot. Foreign Minister Frans Timmermans

[declared](#) that the Dutch cabinet informed Vitens that the government does not oppose cooperation with the Israeli water company.

- Dutch-funded Palestinian NGOs, including Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR), Al Haq, Addameer, Al Mezan, Women's Centre for Legal Aid, and DCI-Palestine Section, sent a letter to Foreign Minister Timmermans and Minister of Development and Cooperation Lilianne Ploumen. The letter's narrative was misleading and inaccurate: "Mekorot is the single largest supplier of water in the West Bank and currently extracts from Palestinian water resources in order to ensure that copious amounts of water reach the settlements and Israel. As such, Mekorot has played an instrumental part in furthering the settlement enterprise, ensuring discriminatory allocation of water, and in denying Palestinian control over natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT)."
- In addition, Dutch NGO platform UCP issued an equally tendentious and misleading [statement](#): "Mekorot is an Israeli national company that is involved in the Occupation of Palestine and in discrimination of Palestinians in Israel. Mekorot pumps water from Palestinian underground aquifers and supplies it to illegal Israeli settlements... This does not only cause for an imbalance in the water supply between Israelis and Palestinians, but also raises the issue of looting natural resources and excessive Israeli water use, including in the settlements. Mekorot is therefore involved in activities that are quite possibly in violation of human rights and humanitarian law."
  - UCP's statement presents a false account of the water issue that completely ignores negotiated agreements that determine water arrangements. Contrary to BDS proponents' claims, Israel's involvement in the West Bank water sector is entirely dictated by the 1995 Interim Agreement (Oslo II) that was mutually agreed to by Israel and the Palestinian Authority and guaranteed by the international community. The agreement of the [Joint Water Committee](#) states the exact obligations of both sides. Per the agreement, Mekorot sources water in the West Bank to provide for both Palestinian and Israeli residents, regardless of nationality.
  - Mekorot [provides](#) more water annually to the PA (57 metric cubic meters [MCM]) than the agreement obligates (29 MCM). This is in addition to water produced by the Palestinians themselves (approximately 140 MCM/Y). Israeli water supply to the settlements is part of Israel's water allocation, and does not affect the Palestinian supply. In addition, Israel actually supplies less water to Israeli citizens in the West Bank than stipulated by the Oslo Accords, in order to transfer the remaining quota to Palestinians.

#### **PGGM/PFZW Dutch pension fund divestment from Israeli banks**

- On January 8, 2014, it was [reported](#) that large Dutch pension fund manager PGGM (Stichting Pensioenfonds voor de Gezondheid, Geestelijke en Maatschappelijke Belangen) would "no longer invest in five Israeli banks, namely Bank Hapoalim, Bank Leumi, First International Bank of Israel, Israel Discount Bank and Mizrahi Tefahot." PGGM's decision was due to these banks' alleged "involvement in financing Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories."
- PFZW (Pension Fund for Care and Well-being), whose funds are managed by PGGM, subsequently [listed](#) the banks on the fund's "exclusion list."
- PGGM and PFZW were lobbied extensively by Dutch NGOs to divest from Israeli banks. NGO influence on the funds' divestment decision was confirmed by PFZW director Peter Borgdoff, who [stated](#): "For several years, we have been addressed on this issue by organizations such as Cordaid, ICCO, IKV PaxChristi, Oxfam Novib, Werkgroep Keerpunt

and the Dutch Palestine Committee. Coincidentally, we also provide pensions to some of these parties.” (Translation from original Dutch by NGO Monitor.)

- In 2009, [Who Profits](#) a BDS project of the Israeli NGO Coalition of Women for Peace (CWP), released a [publication](#) on PGGM/PFZW, alleging the funds’ cooperation with Israeli banks supposedly involved in settlement activities. The report listed Bank Hapoalim, Bank Leumi, Israel Discount Bank, and Mizrahi Tefahot.
- A network of Dutch NGOs, including ICCO, A Different Jewish Voice, and UCP, [circulated](#) the Who Profits report to banks, unions, and BDS activists.
- Stop de Bezetting (Stop the Occupation) also [claims](#) to have lobbied PGGM regarding its activities in Israel.
- Several PGGM/PFZW board members have NGO connections: [Prof. Dr. Gert van Dijk](#), chairman of the PGGM Council, is also an ICCO board member. [Cees Flinterman](#), a member of PFZW’s ethical board, is a board member of The Rights Forum.
  - Flinterman is also a member of the Support Committee of the [Russell Tribunal on Palestine](#), a radical kangaroo court that uses a legal façade to demonize Israel and advance a BDS agenda.
  - As previously mentioned, in September 2013, Flinterman presented closing remarks at a BDS event organized by ABVAKABO FNV trade union.

#### **Royal HaskoningDHV**

- On September 6, 2013, Dutch engineering firm [Royal HaskoningDHV](#) [announced](#) it would terminate involvement in building a wastewater treatment plant for East Jerusalem. The announcement surprised many project partners, including environmental activists, academics, and local authorities who planned a facility for the benefit of the environment and local residents.
- The company’s decision followed pressure from the Dutch government to stop business cooperation beyond the 1949 Armistice Line, and intensive NGO campaigning to apply [political](#) pressure on Israel by “discourag[ing] businesses from all other commercial and investment links with settlements, by means of formal government advice.”
- The decision came a week after the firm reported that the “Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs has informed us of possible aspects relating to international law that may influence the project.” In fact, the government’s position was political, not legal, in nature.
  - In a questions and answers parliamentary session on October 8, 2013, the Dutch government [admitted](#) to have adopted the position of the Palestinian Authority, which accuses Israel of stealing water resources and to have had contacted Royal Haskoning regarding its activities.
- In March 2013, AIV (Adviesraad Internationale Vraahstukken), a quasi-governmental body funded by the Dutch government and tasked with advising the Foreign Ministry on international affairs, published “[Between Words and Deeds: Prospects for a Sustainable Peace in the Middle East](#).” The publication called on the Dutch government to discourage business activities with Israeli entities beyond the 1949 Armistice Lines and to ensure Palestinians’ right to water.
  - Among the AIV publication’s most cited sources was “[Trading Away Peace](#),” the abovementioned effort of 22 political NGOs. The report presents a selective, one-sided, and distorted narrative, and alleges “war crimes” in order to demonize Israel and promote a BDS agenda. The report perpetuates a [false legal argument](#) that considers private corporations subject to international humanitarian law,

despite several national court rulings that have confirmed [only states](#) are subject to this body of law.

- Cordaid, ICCO, and IKV Pax Christi, which influenced the Royal Haskoning decision, also contributed to “Trading Away Peace,” as noted above
- Royal HaskoningDHV’s decision was welcomed by Palestinian NGOs such as Miftah and [Al Haq](#), as well as [Richard Falk](#), the [controversial](#) then-UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- Dutch government reliance on a narrow group of anti-Israel actors that advance a one-sided view of the conflict, rather than pragmatic solutions benefiting both Palestinians and Israelis, damages peace prospects and the ability to reach negotiated conflict resolutions.
- The Royal HaskoningDHV incident provides an illuminating case study on how NGOs and other anti-Israel activists falsely use international legal and human rights discourse to influence government policy makers and business decisions.