

February 25, 2015

CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) Companies and Divestment Campaigns in Europe – An Overview

- A network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and CSR companies are active in promoting boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) campaigns in Europe, by lobbying institutions and corporations to divest from Israel.
- In order to advance a BDS agenda, these groups assert false factual claims and distort legal narratives to accuse Israel of human rights violations and erroneously argue that conducting business with Israel amounts to furthering these alleged violations.
- These campaigns are based on double standards. In many instances, the Arab-Israeli conflict is the only armed conflict addressed. Massive labor and human rights violations occurring in oil-rich and economically powerful countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and China are virtually ignored by NGOs and European CSR companies.
- The NGOs and the CSR partners behind these campaigns deny the context of terrorism, often seeking to sanction companies that provide Israel with products and services to defend civilian populations from attack. These groups ignore international legal obligations on countries to protect their citizens and to prohibit material support for terrorism. The refusal by the NGOs and CSR groups to acknowledge this context in their decision-making processes, their selective approach to international law, and their disregard of Israel's legal right to self-defense, are themselves unethical and immoral.
- CSR comprises policies, norms, and standards that combine finance and business with environmental, human rights, and ethical standards. However, the examples in this report show that political perspectives on the Arab-Israeli conflict – not ethics or international legal standards – determine CSR-related initiatives targeting Israeli companies and companies that do business in Israel.
- A central feature of CSR/BDS campaigns by NGOs is false legal arguments, such as:
 - The claim that private corporations are subject to international humanitarian law (IHL). In actuality, every court ruling on this issue has confirmed that [only states](#) are subject to this body of law.
 - The claim that conducting business over the 1949 armistice line is illegal. In fact, [courts](#) in France, [Canada](#), and the [UK](#) have explicitly found no such prohibition under international law. In this vein, the [Netherlands](#) advertising board ruled it defamatory to claim a company selling goods or operating over armistice lines was acting “illegally” or in violation of international law.
 - The claim that building the Jerusalem Light Rail train system violated international law. On this issue, a French court noted that occupation law allows for the building of transportation infrastructure.
 - Reliance on the discredited 2004 International Court of Justice “advisory opinion” on Israel's security barrier. The decision, which has no binding force in international law, has been criticized by many legal scholars for its basis on a one-sided conclusory mandate, procedural irregularities, completely ignoring the Palestinian suicide bombing campaign (and the role of the security barrier in preventing attacks), and faulty interpretations of international law. Moreover, the opinion does not address liability of corporate activity.
- NGOs and interest groups lobby ethical committees in governments (Ethical Councils) and corporations in an effort to divest from Israel, by referring to positions and studies carried

out by CSR companies. Often, these actors have strong ties with governmental institutions, raising the possibility of conflicts of interest and doubts about their independence.

- For example, some members of the Norwegian Ethical Council also work in the same CSR companies that advise the Council. CSR company SIGLA's founder and director, Ylva Lindbergh, is currently a member of the Norwegian Ethical Council, which advises the Ministry of Finance on divestment decisions. Among its clients are other divestment actors: the companies Hydro and Nordea, as well as a CSR company, Ethix, which is involved in Danish divestment campaigns.
- Examples of European NGOs involved in CSR attacks include:
 - The "European Coordination Committee and Associations for Palestine," a network that includes Norwegian, French, and Irish NGOs. The network is also linked to major Palestinian and Israeli NGOs that share a commitment to BDS.
 - Association France Palestine Solidarité (AFPS) which partnered with Intal (Belgium) for a 2013 campaign against the Dexia bank.
 - The Irish Catholic association Trócaire and the Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign cooperated on several anti-Israel advocacy projects, including pressing for sanctions against Israel in the OECD. Trócaire is member of the UK-based Ecumenical Council on Corporate Responsibility, promoting divestment campaigns in the UK.
 - The French FIDH (Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme) and CCFD-Terre Solidaire helped publish "Trading Away Peace" (2012), which [repeats](#) the BDS agenda, calling on the EU and national governments to wage political warfare through various forms of economic sanctions on Israel. The publication was drafted in cooperation with several other NGOs, such as Diakonia (Sweden), Norwegian People's Aid, Christian Aid (UK), and Trócaire (Ireland).
- Decision makers – banks, corporations, governmental authorities – often rely on an extremely narrow set of sources that are not fully disclosed, in deciding upon economic sanctions. They also fail to demonstrate the existence of violations of international norms or connections between corporate activity and the alleged violations. The lack of transparency, coupled with the distorted legal arguments mentioned above, reflect the political nature of BDS campaigns that aim to delegitimize Israel.
- The quasi-judicial procedures of the Ethical Councils do not fully respect due process:
 - It is unclear the extent to which the Councils attempt to obtain company participation in the process, despite the reputational and economic damage of a negative decision.
 - It is unknown to what extent "investigated" companies are given the opportunity to present a defense.
 - Details on appeals processes or procedures for "de-listing" are not publically available.
- Divestment actors mobilize activists to become shareholders in a targeted company in order to advance divestment motions through a practice called "shareholders' activism":
 - The German NGO Kritische Aktionäre, in cooperation with other groups, used shareholders' activism to promote divestment campaigns at Deutsche Bank and Thyssen Group.
 - Belgium activists became shareholders in Dexia in order to participate in Dexia's 2011 annual meeting; half of the three-hour meeting was consumed by discussion of Dexia's investments in Israel.

- The Swedish Ethical Council uses shareholders' activism to pressure corporations to comply with its standards or face divestment.
- Through divestment campaigns, NGOs reinforce Palestinian rejectionism and anti-normalization policies (i.e., opposition to cooperation with Israelis) and act as a disincentive for efforts by the parties in the conflict to overcome their divisions and seek a peaceful solution based on compromise.

BDS Actors

Country	NGO and Church Groups	CSR, Governmental, and Union Bodies	Israeli and Palestinian NGOs
Norway	Norwegian People's Aid, Palestinakomiteen, and Ecumenical Council of the Church of Norway	International Law Policy Institute, SIGLA, Ethix, the Ethical Council (Ministry of Finance), Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees (Fagforbundet),	Adalah, Alternative Information Center, Coalition of Women for Peace, Gisha, ICAHD, Who Profits, and Zochrot in Israel; Addamer, Al-Haq, Al-Mezan, and Badil in the Palestinian Authority
Sweden	Palestine Solidarity Association in Sweden (PGS), Kvinna till Kvinna, SwedWatch, and Christian organizations Diakonia and the Swedish Church	GES Investment Services, Ethix in connection with the Ethical Council of Swedish Pension Funds	
Denmark	DanWatch, Boykot Israel	CSR companies include Sustainalytics, GES Investment Services, Ethix, Hermes EOS.	
UK	Corporate Watch, Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights, Stop G4S, Palestine Solidarity Campaign, and Boycott Israel Network; Christian groups such as ECCR (Ecumenical Council on Corporate Responsibility) and The Church of England's Ethical Investment Advisory Group	Government pension funds Pensionskassernes Administration (PKA) and Pension Denmark	
Ireland	Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Trócaire, and Sadaka; ECCR (Ecumenical Council of Corporate Responsibility)		
Germany	Pax Christi-Germany, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW)	SRI Kritische Aktionäre	
Netherlands	United Civilians for Peace (UCP) , a platform established by the Dutch NGOs Inter-Church Organization for Development and Cooperation (ICCO), Cordaid, Pax Christi, Oxfam Novib; The Rights Forum	AIV (Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken) a quasi-governmental body funded by the Dutch government and tasked with advising the Dutch Ministry of Development and Cooperation, PGGM/PFZW (Dutch Pension Fund), and ABVAKABO FNV trade union	

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Belgium	Coordination Boycott Israel (COBI) including: Flemish Palestine Committee (VPK), Association Belgo-Palestinienne (ABP), Citizen Movement Palestine (MCP), Centre for Development, Documentation and Information on Palestine (CODIP), Flemish Palestine Committee (VPK), Vrede, and Intal, FIDH, and Belgian sections of Pax Christi International - Pax Christi Vlaanderen and Pax Christi Wallonie-Bruxelles	Triodos Bank, a Netherlands-based bank with a branch in Belgium that claims to be a pioneer in " ethical banking "	
France	AFPS (Association France Palestine Solidarité), FIDH (Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme), and CCFD-Terre Solidaire, the European Coordination Committee and Associations for Palestine	Novethic and Ethix	

Major BDS Campaigns

Country	Year	Targeted companies/ industries	Divesting Body /Campaign	NGO involvement
Germany	2010	Elbit	Deutsche Bank	Kritische Aktionäre Pax Christi-Germany International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW)
	2012	"Settlement" products	Labeling	Misereor, Brot für die Welt, Pax Christi-Germany
	2013	"Settlement" products	Labeling	Misereor, Al-Haq, Pax Christi-Germany
	2013	Arms industry	ThyssenKrupp	Kritische Aktionäre
	2014	Hanson Israel	Heidelberg Cement	Kritische Aktionäre , Pax Christi-Germany
Norway	2006	Bank Hapoalim; Emblaze Ltd; Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd; Caterpillar Inc.	Council on Ethics for the Government Pension Fund	Council on Ecumenical and International Relations of the Church of Norway

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	2008	Israel Electric Company (IEC)	Council on Ethics for the Government Pension Fund	Norwegian People's Aid, Palestinakomiteen, Gisha, Badil
	2009	Elbit Systems Ltd.	Council on Ethics for the Government Pension Fund	Israel Social TV, Mossawa, Machsom Watch, Women Against Violence, Coalition of Women for Peace, Stop the Wall
	2009 , revoked in April 2013 and reintroduced in November 2013	Africa Israel and Danya Cebus Ltd.	Council on Ethics for the Government Pension Fund	Adalah-NY Palestinian BDS National Committee, Civil Coalition for Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem, Palestinian anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign, Norwegian People's Aid Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees
	2011	Shikun & Binui Ltd.	Council on Ethics for the Government Pension Fund	No information disclosed.
	2013	Cemex	Nordea Bank, and SIGLA	Norwegian People's Aid, together with Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees
	2013	G4S	University of Oslo	Students' Palestine Committee
	2013	G4S	Industri Energi Trade Union	Addameer, Palestinakomiteen
France	2005-2006	Veolia, Alstom	Construction of Jerusalem's light rail train	Palestinian BDS National Committee (BDN), Stop The wall, Amnesty International
	2009	Veolia, Alstom	Construction of Jerusalem's light rail train	BDN group member Civic Coalition for Defending Palestinian Rights funded by Norwegian People's Aid and the Norwegian Representative Office to the Palestinian

Country	Year	Targeted companies/ industries	Divesting Body /Campaign	NGO involvement
				Authority
	2007-2011	Veolia, Alstom	Versailles Court of Appeals	AFPS (Association France-Palestine Solidarité, Amnesty International-France)
	2012	“Settlement” products labeling	French Members of Parliament	AFPS (Association France-Palestine Solidarité), Fédération International des Droits de l’Homme) and CCFD-Terre Solidaire Norwegian People’s Aid, Irish Trócaire, Swedish Diakonia, Norwegian Church Aid, British Christian Aid
	2013	Orange Sha’ar Hayarden project	Ethics and Development conference	Maison des Tiers-Mondes et de la Solidarité Internationale
	2013	Dexia	Shareholders	AFPS (Association France-Palestine Solidarité)
Ireland	2007	Mashav Group Ltd	Cement Roadstone Holding (CRH)	Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC), Palestinian Federation of General Trade Unions, Jews for Justice for Palestinians
	2010	Veolia	Local authorities Dublin metro	Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC), Sadaka
	2010	“Settlement” products labeling	Irish MP and political parties	Sadaka
	2012	Nesher Group Mashav Group Ltd	Cement Roadstone Holding (CRH) Shareholders	Jews for Justice for Palestinians, Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC)
	2010-2014	Ethical councils of investment	Irish MP and political parties Trade Unions Local councils	Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC), Palestine Centre for Human Rights, ECCR (Ecumenical Council on Corporate

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				Responsibility), Sadaka
Belgium	2007	Otzar Hashilton Hamekomi (OSM) Bank	Dexia Bank	Alternative Information Centre, Coordination Boycott Israel (COBI), Palestina Solidariteit (PS), Association Belgo- Palestinienne (ABP), Vrede, Citoyen Mouvement Palestine (MCP),
	2014	"Made in illegality"	Various Belgian companies	Intal, Vrede, Palestina Solidariteit, ABP, FIDH , local branches of Pax Christi
	2014	Supposed contract to build ports in Ashdod and Haifa	Jan De Nul	Belgo-Palestinian Association, Belgium Algemene Centrale van het ABVV (Trade Union), Intal, Belgium Vredesactie, Belgium Palestina Solidariteit, Belgium Nordine Saidi for Citizen Movement Palestine, Belgium (MCP), The Palestine Committee Verviers, Belgium
UK	2009	"Settlement" produce	UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) voluntary labeling guidelines	Oxfam, War on Want
	2012	Agrexco, Arava Export Growers, Adafresh, Mehadrin	Co-Operative Group produce boycott	Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), Boycott Israel Network (BIN)
	2012	G4S	Stop G4S	Corporate Watch, Addameer, Adalah, Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI), Defence for Children International - Palestine Section, Coalition of Women for

Country	Year	Targeted companies/ industries	Divesting Body /Campaign	NGO involvement
				Peace/Who Profits.
	2013	G4S	Complaint at the UK National Contact Point (NCP)	Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights (LPHR)
	2013	Bank Hapoalim, Bank Leumi, First International Bank of Israel, Israel Discount Bank and Mizrahi Tefahot	PGGM (Dutch Pension Fund)	Cordaid, ICCO, IKV PaxChristi, Oxfam Novib, Werkgroep Keepunt and the Dutch Palestine Committee
Netherlands	2013	Mekorot	Vitens Water Company	Cordaid, ICCO, IKV PaxChristi, Oxfam Novib
	2013	Waste water treatment facility	Royal HaskoningDHV	Cordaid, ICCO, IKV PaxChristi
	2010	Africa Israel Investments and Elbit	Danske Bank,	Ethix
Denmark	Non available	Danya Cebus, Elbit, Aryt Industries Ltd.	Danske Bank	Ethix
	Non-available	Ashot, Magal Security Systems, Ltd., Elbit Systems, Ltd., Aryt Industries Ltd.	Pensionskassernes Administration (PKA)	Sustainalytics
	Non-available	Aryt Industries Ltd.	Pension Denmark	Hermes EOS
	2014	Bank HaPoalim	Danske Bank,	Ethix
	2014	Ahava Products	Magasin, Salling Matas health care store	ICAHN, Coalition of Women for Peace (CWP)
	2008	Assa Abloy	Publication of " Illegal Ground: Assa Abloy's business in occupied Palestinian territory "	Palestine Solidarity Association of Sweden (PGS, <i>Palestina Grupperna i Sverige</i>), Swedwatch, Diakonia

Country	Year	Targeted companies/ industries	Divesting Body /Campaign	NGO involvement
				and The Church of Sweden
Sweden	2009	Elbit Systems Ltd.	Swedish Ethical Council	
	2010	Alstom and Veolia	Swedish Ethical Council	
	2010	Motorola	Swedish Ethical Council	
	2013	G4S	Church of Sweden in Umeå	Church of Sweden, Diakonia