



What's the Problem with BDS? A Progressive Critique

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INTRODUCTION

People on the left are increasingly attracted to BDS—the movement to boycott, divest from and sanction Israel and Israelis. BDS is understandably appealing to those who are frustrated with Israel’s continued occupation of the West Bank, approach to the people and economy of the Gaza Strip, and discrimination against Arab citizens of Israel proper.

Why not give it a try? Why not shake Israelis out of their complacent acceptance of the occupation? Why not show them that continuing the unjust status quo will have adverse consequences for Israel?

After all, nothing else has worked. Negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority have gotten nowhere. A right-wing Israeli government elected in 2015 keeps expanding [Jewish settlements](#)¹ in the West Bank and includes Cabinet officials who hurl [racist insults](#) at Israel’s Arab citizens.²

People who consider themselves to be progressive, who support human rights and social justice, need to do **something**, don’t we? Yes, but the global BDS movement is not the answer.³

Produced for left-leaning people – university students, professors, union members and others – who are tempted to endorse and help the BDS movement, the following analysis will show why that movement’s goals are problematic and why its tactics will not foster peace or justice in the Middle East. In fact, BDS does more harm than good. The movement diverts energies from more constructive political activity that could bring tangible, positive changes to Palestinians and Israelis. And members of the Israeli right use it as a propaganda tool to cultivate fear and keep themselves in power.

Conventional pro-Israel advocates who paint the entire BDS movement as an anti-Semitic effort to destroy Israel are oversimplifying. Not everyone who supports boycotts as a political tool to end the occupation wants Israel to disappear. Indeed, some self-described Zionists call for [boycotts of products](#) from West Bank settlements but not Israel proper⁴ There are differences of opinion about such limited boycotts, but those who support them do not have the same agenda, tactics or rhetoric as the global BDS movement. This document provides an overview of that movement and suggests that those who want to help end the Israeli occupation and foster an enduring Middle East peace think twice before supporting BDS.

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TAKING ONE SIDE IN A PALESTINIAN ARGUMENT

Those who support BDS may not realize that they are taking sides in a bitter, internecine argument among the Palestinian people.

The current movement originated in a 2005 [call](#) from a variety of Palestinian organizations to boycott Israel until it complied with its "obligations under international law, including:

- 1) Ending the colonization and occupation of all Arab lands occupied by Israel and dismantling the Wall;⁵
- 2) Recognizing the rights of Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality and;
- 3) Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194."⁶

To bolster their legitimacy, BDS advocates outside of the occupied territories often assert that they are answering a call from "Palestinian civil society." But while mobilizing support, they generally neglect to mention that their campaigns are **not** endorsed by the internationally acknowledged representatives of the Palestinian people, the PLO and the Palestinian Authority (PA), as well as other important Palestinians.

"No, we do not support the boycott of Israel," Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas [told reporters](#) in South Africa, although the PA does support a boycott of settlements.⁷ One of Abbas' advisors, Majdi Khaldi, said, "We are neighbors with Israel, we have agreements with Israel, we recognize Israel, we are not asking anyone to [boycott products](#) of Israel."⁸

Sari Nusseibeh, the President of Al-Quds University and a widely respected educator in East Jerusalem, has spoken out against [academic boycotts of Israel](#).⁹ Bassam Eid, founder of the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group, has this to say about BDS: "For our own sake, we need to reconcile with our Israeli neighbors, not reject and revile them."¹⁰ The iconic Edward Said believed it was "fatuous to impose total blockades against everything Israeli (now in fashion in various progressive Arab circles) and to pretend that that is the really [virtuous nationalist path](#)."¹¹

As Jake Wallis Simons reports in [The Telegraph](#):

From the Palestinian point of view, the arguments against BDS are quite straightforward. For one thing, BDS gives the distinct impression that the Palestinian side has no interest in the pursuit of compromise, peace and the two-state solution; activists have managed to block a succession of attempts at dialogue between ordinary Israelis and Palestinians in Ramallah and East Jerusalem.

For another, large numbers of Palestinian entrepreneurs – 16,000 of them, at the last count – heavily invest in the stable Israeli economy. According to researchers at Al-Quds University, Palestinian investments in Israeli businesses dwarf those made in their own territories.¹²

The oft-cited model for the BDS movement is the international boycott of South Africa. That boycott was clearly endorsed by the African National Congress and leaders of the movement for black liberation in South Africa. BDS has no such endorsement by key Palestinian institutions and nationalist leaders.

LACK OF CLARITY ABOUT ONE STATE OR TWO

Similarly, some of the most visible BDS leaders take one side of another intra-communal Palestinian argument: whether to keep struggling for an independent Palestinian state or for one state from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean sea. Omar Barghouti, Ali Abunimah and other prominent BDS advocates are openly contemptuous of the two-state goal and the diplomatic efforts that have been exerted to reach it. That is because they reject the validity of a Jewish state.¹³¹⁴ They adhere to what Alan Johnson, the editor of *Fathom*, calls “vindictive one-statism,” which “seeks to end Israel by rewinding the film of history and undoing 1948.”¹⁵

Officially, the BDS movement takes no position on the one-state/two-state question. But more than a few prominent BDS leaders who are shaping the conversation about Israel on North American campuses and in church organizations are one-state advocates.¹⁶

In contrast, the Palestinian Liberation Organization has endorsed the two-state solution since 1988. An independent Palestinian state remains the goal of the Palestinian Authority. It is also endorsed by a large swath of the opposition parties in the Israeli Knesset. To be sure, the odds against establishing a viable Palestinian state next to Israel are more daunting than ever. That is one reason why polls show that support for two states has steadily and despairingly diminished among both Palestinians and Israelis. However, that solution is still endorsed by far more Arabs and Jews in Israel and the territories than the alternative one-state option.¹⁷ We concur with Ayman Odeh, the Israeli Arab leader who leads the Joint List in the Knesset, who said:

There is no other realistic solution than the two-state solution. Now that we’ve struggled for so long we are not going to leave it without trying to solve it. This is also a moral issue. I can’t expect the people starving in Gaza to just wait until the conditions are right for one state.¹⁸

Political activists who still believe the two-state solution is the only feasible way to end the ongoing tragedy of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict need to choose how to spend their limited time and energies. The groups supporting BDS in North America are not vehicles

that will help Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews achieve two states, and they are not mobilizing support for that goal. They have other objectives. In contrast, an array of other organizations is dedicated to creating grassroots support for a Palestinian state and encouraging investment in it. If you think that's a good idea, they need your help. We note a few of these organizations below in "What else is to be done?"

FEEDING THE RIGHT-WING NARRATIVE IN ISRAEL

At a [cabinet meeting](#) in May 2015, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu put the BDS movement in the spotlight. "We are in the midst of a great struggle being waged against the State of Israel, an international campaign to blacken its name... Now, this is a phenomenon that we have known in the history of our people," he said, invoking the Nazis. "They said we are the foundation of evil in the world. They said that we are the poisoners of the wells of humanity."¹⁹

BDS supporters claim that the attention Israel is now devoting to their movement is a testament to their success. Gershon Gorenberg noted, "In fact, the actual impact of BDS at the moment is to help Netanyahu stay in power — a favor he is returning by publicizing the movement and giving its activists an undeserved feeling of accomplishment."²⁰

Despite the Israeli government's alarm, BDS has not made average Israelis feel the cost of the occupation. Instead, BDS has strengthened the Israeli right wing and given its leaders talking points that bolster Israelis' siege mentality. Ultimately, BDS undermines key constituencies in Israel that are trying to the end the occupation, namely Israeli academics and progressive NGOs. [Don Futterman](#), in his plea to fellow Israeli leftists not to support BDS, writes in *Haaretz*:

If BDS ever really gets going, it will cause Israelis to circle the wagons, while our leaders purr, "They're all anti-Semites"...[T]he propagandists currently heading Israel's government have proven adept at using the "everyone is against us" mantra to get themselves elected, and to deflect criticism of the occupation and of our military behavior during three wars in Gaza. This "whole world hates the Jews" narrative is simplistic and appealing, shifting the blame always away from ourselves...

Leftist support for BDS will only distance other Israelis from relaunching the discourse about the future of the occupation and the West Bank that we so desperately need — and that our government leaders are so desperate to avoid.²¹

UNREALISTIC THINKING ABOUT THE RIGHT OF RETURN

Another problem with the BDS movement is that one of its official goals, implementation of the Palestinian right of return as defined by UN Resolution 194, is implausible. The resolution states that “refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property.”

Powerful arguments can be advanced for and against the right of return. We do not think it has a sound basis in international law, among other problems. But even if you believe in it, that doesn’t mean it makes sense to base a whole political movement on achieving it. Noam Chomsky, a fierce critic of Israel and Zionism, has disappointed BDS supporters with his [devastating critique](#) of this objective, which he refers to as “(3)”: “[T]here is virtually no meaningful support for (3) beyond the BDS movement itself. Nor is (3) dictated by international law...Insistence on (3) is a virtual guarantee of failure.”²²

The harsh reality is that the vast majority of Israeli Jews do not accept the right of more than 5 million Palestinian refugees – including all the descendants of those who originally fled or were forced to leave Palestine in 1947-1948 – to return to Israel proper. They believe this will mean the end of the Jewish state. Progressives who endorse the right of return are not just engaging in wishful thinking; they are engaging in magical thinking.²³

The international BDS movement’s three goals, including the right of return, are explicitly supported and promoted by the main organizations pushing for BDS in North America, including the U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, Students for Justice in Palestine, Jewish Voice for Peace and others. Those who make common cause with that movement are effectively promoting its objectives, whether or not that is their intention.

AN AGENDA OF VILIFICATION

One can be angered by specific Israeli policies or Israel’s rightward drift and still be troubled by the one-sided, vituperative rhetoric of the BDS movement.

When BDS supporters frame the conversation about the Middle East in public forums and online, they consistently convey a sense of moral absolutism that holds Israel and its founders wholly responsible for Palestinian suffering. There is widespread acceptance of an ideology that “reduces the complex history of a people (the Jews) and the nature of the state (Israel) to the simple expression of a Bad Idea (Zionism) and the Bad Men and Bad Women who pursued it (Israelis).”²⁴

This mindset erases the distinction between the territories Israel conquered in 1967 and Israel proper, west of the Green Line. It treats the entire Zionist enterprise as nothing more than a racist exercise in ongoing settler colonialism and ethnic cleansing. European anti-Semitism, the Holocaust and the desperation of Jews seeking refuge when no other refuge existed are either ignored or minimized, as are the legitimate security fears of Israelis.

The ideology of the BDS movement and the anti-Zionist left has been ably dissected and decried by more than a few left-of-center thinkers, including David Hirsch,²⁵ Alan Johnson,²⁶ Cary Nelson,²⁷ Ellen Willis²⁸ and Nancy Koppelman.²⁹ We won't reinvent that wheel here, but we will point out an equally distressing phenomenon – rather than trying to prompt tangible change in the Middle East, the *raison d'être* of many BDS campaigns is to create platforms to spout anti-Israel and anti-Zionist rhetoric.

In [*Boycotting Israel Is Wrong: The Progressive Path to Peace Between Palestinians and Israel*](#), Philip Mendes and Nick Dyrenfurth describe a highly publicized dispute in Brooklyn's Park Slope Food Co-op over a boycott resolution, which eventually failed:

Arguably the... 'no' vote paled in comparison with the national and international exposure the Park Slope example garnered for the BDS movement, allowing an extremist interpretation of the Israel-Palestine conflict to be widely broadcast. Indeed this increasingly seemed to be the very purpose of BDS campaigns.³⁰

BDS organizers on North American university campuses have presented a host of divestment resolutions to student governments. Even when they've passed, they have had no impact on the actual investment decisions of universities. These decisions are handled by trustees and advisors, who have overwhelmingly ignored the resolutions. BDS advocates know that. The only concrete result of their resolutions, like "Israel Apartheid Week" exhibits and other pro-BDS efforts on campus, is the vilification of Israel, its policies and, in too many cases, its very existence.

There is nothing wrong, per se, with espousing a specific perspective on geopolitics. But that is all that BDS organizers are achieving when they attract attention on campus and in church organizations, unions and other settings. In the process, well-meaning people get the false impression that they can provide concrete help to the Palestinian people by not buying hummus, calling for Elton John to refrain from performing in Tel Aviv or boycotting Israeli academics and Motorola.

A related shortcoming of the BDS movement is that its advocates have no concrete plan to achieve their stated objectives. When pressed, they can offer no practical political path, no route from A to B. They seem to rely on a vague dream in which the Israeli people will someday feel so isolated and under so much pressure that they will demand an end to the occupation and other changes.

Israel has one of the world's strongest and most stable economies. Even if economic boycotts and related measures grew more popular internationally, it would take many

years before they would have a significant impact on Israeli policies. Neither Palestinians nor Israelis can afford to wait that long. And as the weaker and more vulnerable population, Palestinians are certain to bear the brunt of continued conflict, violence and a status quo that denies their basic democratic rights, including their right to self-determination.

WHAT ELSE IS TO BE DONE?

After discussing the possibility of “international intervention... to break the deadlock required to guarantee Israeli security needs and genuine Palestinian self-determination,” Mendes and Dyrenfurth suggest that:

A sense of humility on the part of outsiders is necessary. Practical support rather than empty sloganeering is required. Helping each side of the conflict talk with each other rather than boycott one another is a pretty good place to start. It is...high time that BDS activists...were sent a clear message: get out of the way of those people who are genuinely committed to fostering the preconditions of a two-state solution.”³¹

Too often, the question of whether or not to support BDS co-opts the conversation about Israel and Palestine among people on the left. A wide range of options is available to those who want to help end the occupation, foster a negotiated two-state solution, protect the rights of Arab citizens of Israel and achieve other positive goals. For example, they can support:

- Joint Arab-Jewish initiatives in Israel and the Palestinian territories that oppose settlement expansion and the occupation such as Combatants for Peace, Women Wage Peace and the Parents Circle-Families Forum;
- Other brave Arab and Jewish groups that engage in constructive dialogue, jointly solve concrete problems, create the infrastructure for a Palestinian state and forge a shared future for Israelis and Palestinians. There are too many to single out here, but most have a common home in the Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP), a coalition of 90 organizations. One of several tangible ways to help is to work on grassroots campaigns for congressional legislation that will provide funds for civil society activists in Israel and Palestine;³²
- Groups that want the U.S. government to take an evenhanded approach to the conflict, press Israel to overcome its settlement addiction, and/or promote the kind of creative international diplomacy needed for a two-state solution. These include, among others, Ameinu, the Geneva Initiative, Churches for Middle East Peace, the American Task Force on Palestine, Americans for Peace Now, J Street and J Street U.

The Third Narrative initiative has prepared a guide for activists, "Progressive Action for Human Rights, Peace & Reconciliation in Israel and Palestine," which provides an extensive list of groups that we believe need and deserve support.³³³⁴

Nancy Koppelman sums up the stark choice facing those on the left who are trying to figure out which grassroots efforts to support in Israel and Palestine:

The Israel/Palestine conflict is a puzzle that badly needs bold, brave, informed engagement among parties who disagree. But the BDS movement generally expresses intense compassion for one of the contending parties, while showing spectacular indifference to the other...

BDS principles aim towards an outcome already known to its adherents, based on an analysis of causes they think they need not analyze again. This conclusion-driven approach threatens a wide range of emergent work by Israelis and Palestinians alike who are collaborating, often against terrible odds, to address the decades-long conflict plaguing their peoples, even as geography undeniably ties their fates, like their histories, tightly to one another.³⁵

About The Third Narrative

The Third Narrative is an educational initiative that supports Israelis and Palestinians who are working to end the occupation, create a two-state solution and stop discrimination against Arab citizens of Israel. We believe that the truth about Israel and Palestine is rarely black and white; it resides in a gray area to which advocates on either side rarely venture. That is where we try to go, with original materials that address the common claims of both the anti-Israel far left and the pro-settlement far right. The Third Narrative is an initiative of Ameinu, a North American Jewish organization that supports progressive causes in the U.S., Canada, Israel and the Palestinian territories. See <http://www.thirdnarrative.org>.

¹ See, for example, “Israel Approves New Homes in West Bank Settlements,” *Reuters*, July 29, 2015 (<http://www.voanews.com/content/ap-israel-rules-contested-west-bank-complex-must-be-demolished/2882951.html>).

² See, for example, Jonathan Lis, “Knesset Erupts After Deputy Minister Calls on Arab Lawmakers to 'Return' Israeli Citizenship,” *Haaretz*, June 24, 2014 (<http://www.haaretz.com/news/israel/.premium-1.662791>).

³ The Third Narrative’s website focuses in more detail on academic, cultural and economic boycotts of Israel, anti-normalization as well as other topics related to the far left’s critiques of Israel. See <http://thirdnarrative.org/issues/bds-does-not-equal-peace-articles>.

⁴ Peter Beinart, “To Save Israel, Boycott the Settlements,” *New York Times*, March 18, 2012.

⁵ In 2007, this “obligation” was amended by the BDS National Committee to “ending the occupation and colonization of all Arab lands occupied since 1967.”

⁶ “Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS,” *BDS* (<http://www.bdsmovement.net/call>).

⁷ Ali Abunimah, “In South Africa, Abbas Opposes Boycott of Israel,” *Electronic Intifada*, December 12, 2013 (<https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/south-africa-abbas-opposes-boycott-israel>).

⁸ Jake Wallis Simons, “Why Even the Palestinian Authority Opposes a Boycott of Israel,” *The Telegraph*, June 19, 2014 (<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/jakewallissimons/100275416/israels-enemies-are-dealt-a-heavy-blow-by-the-palestinian-authority/>).

⁹ Matthew Kalman, “Palestinians Divided Over Boycott of Israeli Universities,” *New York Times*, January 19, 2014 (http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/20/world/middleeast/palestinians-divided-over-boycott-of-israeli-universities.html?_r=0).

¹⁰ Bassem Eid, “The Palestinian Case Against BDS,” June 25, 2015, *The Third Narrative* (<http://thirdnarrative.org/bds-does-not-equal-peace-articles/the-palestinian-case-against-bds/>).

¹¹ Edward Said, “A Reply To Arab Intellectuals,” *Le Monde Diplomatique English Edition*, September, 1998.

¹² Simons, op. cit.

¹³ See, for example, “An Interview with Omar Barghouti”: “I am completely and categorically against binationalism because it assumes that there are two nations with equal moral claims to the land and therefore, we have to accommodate both national rights. I am completely opposed to that, but it would take me too long to explain why, so I will stick to the model I support, which is a secular, democratic state: one person, one vote — regardless of ethnicity, religion, nationality, gender, and so on and so forth,” *The Electronic Intifada*, May 30, 2009. (<http://electronicintifada.net/content/boycotts-work-interview-omar-barghouti/8263>). See also, “The One State Declaration,” *Electronic Intifada*, Nov. 29, 2007 (<http://electronicintifada.net/content/one-state-declaration/793>).

¹⁴ It is telling that Norman Finkelstein, a well-known, harsh critic of Israel, has denounced the organized international BDS movement. He calls it a “cult” that aims for “the end of Israel,” which is why one of its goals is the Palestinian right of return. That should give pause to people who are considering BDS but don’t want to give credence to an effort to abolish the Jewish state. See “Arguing the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Campaign with Norman Finkelstein,” *HuffPoMonitor*, Feb. 12, 2012 (<http://vimeo.com/36854424>).

¹⁵ Allan Johnson, “Intellectual Incitement: The Anti-Zionist Ideology and the Creation of the Anti-Zionist Subject,” in *The Case Against Academic Boycotts of Israel*, eds. Cary Nelson and Gabriel Noah Brahm (MLA Members for Scholars Rights, 2015) p. 274.

¹⁶ “For example, nearly a dozen professors who are “[endorsers](#)” of the U.S. Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel signed [a letter to President Obama](#) that asserted: “Almost certainly the only hope of a lasting solution is a single state in Israel/Palestine, committed to the civil and human rights of all peoples within its boundaries. That is, after all, the standard to which we hold all other states in the world, Israel alone excepted.” See www.usacbi.org/2009/01/dear-president-elect-obama/ for the letter and <http://www.usacbi.org/endorsers/> for the organization’s endorsers.

¹⁷ According to [a poll](#) taken in September 2015 by the Palestinian Policy and Research Center, 48% of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip endorsed the two-state solution (a drop from 51% four months before). However, in the same September poll, 30% of Palestinians backed “a one-state solution in which Arabs and Jews enjoy equal rights,” 69% opposed it. As of June 2015, [a thin majority](#) of Israelis backed two states (51%), according to the Harry S. Truman Institute for the Advanced Study of Peace at Hebrew University, a drop from 62% who backed it in June 2014.

¹⁸ Ayman Odeh, comments to 2015 Americans for Peace Now study tour, from organizational email: “Next Israeli Gov’t, More Settlers in East Jerusalem,” May 6, 2015.

¹⁹ Gershom Gorenberg, “Why Bibi and the BDS Movement Need Each Other,” *American Prospect*, June 10, 2015.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Don Futterman, “Why Israel’s Left Must End the Occupation but Not Support BDS,” *Haaretz*, June 9, 2015 (<http://www.haaretz.com/beta/.premium-1.660338>).

²² Noam Chomsky, “On Israel-Palestine and BDS,” *The Nation*, July 2, 2014 (<http://www.thenation.com/article/israel-palestine-and-bds/>).

²³ In the past, Palestinian and Israeli negotiators have discussed enabling the vast majority of Palestinian refugees to immigrate to their own state or receive compensation. A limited number could return to Israel proper based on mutual agreement between the parties. But it is hard to believe that leaders of the BDS movement would ever accept this symbolic, limited right of return. Omar Barghouti insists that “[T]he rights stated in the BDS call are non-negotiable, as they constitute the minimal requirements for the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable right to self-determination.” See “The BDS Movement at 10: An Interview With Omar Barghouti,” *MondoWeiss*, July 9, 2015 (<http://mondoweiss.net/2015/07/movement-interview-barghouti>).

²⁴ Johnson, *op. cit.*, 261.

²⁵ David Hirsch, “Anti-Zionism and Anti-Semitism,” *Working Paper*, Institute for the Study of Global Anti-Semitism and Policy, 2007 (<http://isgap.org/working-paper-david-hirsh/>).

²⁶ Alan Johnson, “Anti-Semitic Anti-Zionism and the Left,” *The Jewish Chronicle Online*, Sept. 10, 2015 (<http://www.thejc.com/comment-and-debate/comment/144673/antisemitic-anti-zionism-and-left>).

²⁷ Cary Nelson, “The Problem With Judith Butler: The Philosophy of the Movement to Boycott Israel,” *Los Angeles Review of Books*, March 16, 2014 (<https://lareviewofbooks.org/essay/problem-judith-butler-political-philosophy-movement-boycott-israel>).

²⁸ Ellen Willis, “Is There Still A Jewish Question? Why I’m An Anti-Anti-Zionist,” in *Wrestling with Zion: Progressive Jewish-American Responses to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, eds. Tony Kushner and Alisa Solomon (Gravoe, 2003) pp: 226-232.

²⁹ Nancy Koppelman, “‘When you want to do something, join us!’: The Limits of the Social Justice Movement in Higher Education,” in *The Case Against Academic Boycotts of Israel*, eds. Nelson and Brahm, pp. 202-217.

³⁰ Phillip Mendes and Nick Dyrenfurth, *Boycotting Israel Is Wrong: The Progressive Path to Peace Between Palestinians and Israel*. (NewSouth, 2015) Kindle location: 1668.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Kindle location 1822.

³² “International Fund Reintroduced into Congress by Republicans and Democrats,” ALLMEP press release, March 20, 2015 (http://www.allmep.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=282:international-fund-reintroduce.d-into-congress-by-republicans-and-democrats-&catid=11:newsallmep&Itemid=25).

³³ See <http://thirdnarrative.org>.

³⁴ Be forewarned: support for programs that foster Israeli-Palestinian cooperation may well run afoul of the BDS movement’s credo of “anti-normalization.” According to this principle, Arab-Jewish initiatives must be boycotted if they are not explicitly devoted to “co-resistance” and if they don’t accept all of the “rights” espoused by BDS. It is worth quoting the response of ALLMEP’s co-directors:

In their effort to delegitimize coexistence programming, anti-normalization activists lampoon people-to-people activities as Israelis and Palestinians coming together to eat hummus then go home. This is an utterly false representation of the people-to-people movement today. Look at the thousands engaged by Parents Circle or Combatants for Peace, the farmers whose crops have not wasted thanks to Olive Oil Without Borders or the communities receiving fresh water owing to the work of EcoPeace. These are just a sample of thousands of people whose lives have been changed through joint programs.

Change is painfully slow and real progress does not come fast enough for those who suffer the brunt of the occupation, but these joint programs are the best hope of fundamentally changing the worldviews of those who have been fighting for generations. People-to-People work today has evolved to be less about dialogue and far more about building trust. This is painfully slow and offers only incremental progress, yet given how each population *fears* the other, offers a real option for progress.

From: Joel Braunold and Huda Abuarquob, “A Bigger Threat Than BDS: Anti-normalization, Haaretz, July 2, 2015 (<http://www.haaretz.com/jewish-world/the-jewish-thinker/.premium-1.664018>).

³⁵ Koppelman, op cit., pp 215-216.