

OPEN LETTER

To:

Mr. Mark Rutte
Minister van Algemene Zaken,
Postbus 20001,
2500 EA Den Haag

Foreign Affairs Minister Frans Timmermans,
and The Dutch House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer)

From:

The staff of International Institute of Social Studies

Date: 31 July 2014

Dear Prime Minister Rutte,
Foreign Affairs Minister Timmermans, and
Members of the Cabinet and House of Representatives

We address you as a group of employees, faculty members, PhD students and researchers of the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), in The Hague. The ISS is an educational, research and policy institution, part of Erasmus University Rotterdam. We belong to very diverse disciplinary backgrounds, but we all equally share social justice as a major inspiration of our work. As teachers and researchers, administrators, managers, students, policy analysts and practitioners, we take social justice as our political position towards the world around us.

In that world, the State of Israel is taking a particularly dire political stand. Today, the Israeli government and military are yet again engaged in a war against Palestinians in Gaza, the third since 2008. According to a number of international human rights organizations, Israel has been committing numerous war crimes against the civilian Palestinian population on all Palestinian territories, and especially during its wars against Gaza. Recently, the UN Human Rights Council has launched its own investigation into allegations of war crimes against Gazan civilians. All allegations and evidence collected by the international and national human rights and humanitarian organization are freely available via internet, so we will not list them here.

Rather, we write to you with the request to step up your criticism of the Israeli policy of occupation and wars against the Palestinian people. We urge you to take a further step and employ means that are officially and internationally recognized as legitimate, non-violent practices that any state can use against another state that has ignored all other calls to change its behaviour – boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel.

Between 1948 and today, the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council, and the UN Human Rights Council (since its creation in 2006) have adopted a large number of Resolutions regarding Israel and Palestine. In the first decades following the establishment of the State of Israel, the majority of the Resolutions were concerned with Palestinian refugees expelled from their land by the Israeli military after 1948. Security Council Resolution 242, adopted in 1967, following the six-day war, confirmed the 'inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war'. Since the early 1970s, resolutions have repeatedly demanded 'a full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories', and have addressed 'Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories' (as the titles of the Resolutions indicate). In addition, as the UN Resolution 1869 of January 2009 testifies, Gaza is besieged by Israel, to the extent that even 'food, fuel and medical supplies' are not allowed in.

So far none of these UN Resolutions have been respected by Israel's Government. To the contrary, the occupation of the West Bank and annexation of East-Jerusalem have only deepened and the blockade on Gaza has been in place since 2007.

In calling for the Dutch Government to take measures of boycott, divestment and sanctions against the State of Israel we are following a number of institutions around the world that have already severed their ties with the State of Israel. We also stress that The Dutch Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV), at page 39 of its report *Between Words and Deeds: Prospects for a Sustainable Peace in the Middle East*, published in April 2013, suggests, among other things, that Israel's actions in the occupied Palestinian territories 'give cause to freeze or even restrict' the bilateral relations between the Netherlands and Israel, 'particularly at an economic and military level'.

The example of the anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa shows that offending governments do not easily change their ways unless put under intense diplomatic pressure. It took decades of struggle to achieve the abolition of apartheid. What helped in this struggle was the work of countless numbers of individuals, organizations and institutions across the world, and in the Netherlands, that acted in solidarity with the oppressed. Equally important were the actions of world governments, including the Dutch Government, that took a stand against the oppressors. We therefore ask the Dutch Government to officially implement boycott, divestment and sanctions against the State of Israel.

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