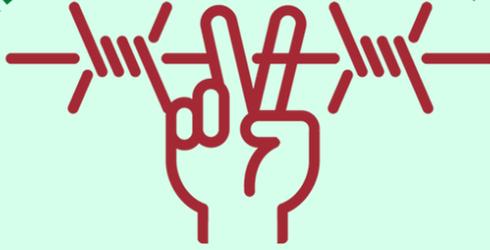




*For freedom, justice and equality*



**APARTHEID  
FREE  
ZONE**

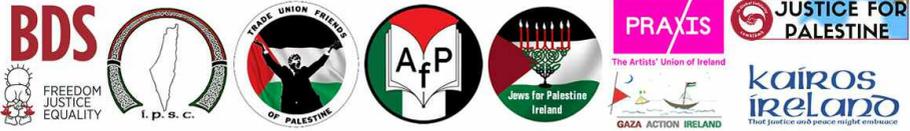
*in solidarity with the Palestinian people*

**BDS** 



# **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Second Edition, February 2026



Apartheid Free Zones is a joint initiative of the Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Trade Union Friends of Palestine, Academics for Palestine, Jewish Voice for a Just Peace – Ireland, Gaza Action Ireland, Comhlámh Justice for Palestine, Kairos Ireland, Praxis – The Artists’ Union of Ireland, Apartheid-Free Arts, and is supported by the Palestinian Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement.

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# **Apartheid Free Zones - Frequently Asked Questions**

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# APARTHEID FREE ZONES

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. What is an Apartheid Free Zone?

Apartheid Free Zones (AFZ) are an exciting new global initiative that will help to transform our local communities into spaces of solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice and equality.

For over seven decades, the Palestinian people have faced harsh injustices: dispossession and ethnic cleansing, colonisation, war crimes, apartheid, mass incarceration, enforced exile, a 50+ year occupation, and a 10+ year siege of Gaza.

In 2005 over 170 Palestinian civil society groups issued a call for international support for a global campaign of **Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)** to pressure Israel into ending its apartheid system and occupation of Palestinian lands, ensuring equal rights for Palestinian citizens of the Israeli state, and respecting the right of return for Palestinian refugees. This campaign draws inspiration from the similar worldwide campaign boycotting South Africa during the Apartheid era.

### **Apartheid Free Zones are an answer to this call for solidarity.**

By pledging to support the global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign that aims to help Palestinians to win their freedom, any organised group of people can publicly declare themselves to be an Israeli Apartheid Free Zone. This can include shops, restaurants, bars, businesses, community organisations, trade unions, NGOs, sports clubs, arts groups, collective spaces, political organisations, student unions, and other groups, and even local councils, taking a stand for human rights.

AFZs are a grassroots initiative, building from the bottom up, with the ultimate aim of making all of Ireland into an Apartheid Free Zone.

Across the world, spaces such as shops, cafes, community centres, cultural institutions, local businesses, city councils are declaring themselves to be Israeli Apartheid Free Zones. They are pledging to publicly support the boycott of Israel.

As more and more organisations within a city, town, village or community declare themselves to be Apartheid Free Zones, it will help to build a real and deep culture of solidarity within your community.

An organisation or business that wants to become an Apartheid Free Zone commits to supporting the principles of the BDS movement, to boycotting Israeli products and institutions, and international companies that profit from Israeli human rights abuses, and to publicly declaring that it is an Apartheid Free Zone.

Apartheid Free Zones allow all kinds of organisations – from a community group to a business to municipal council – to show their support for the Palestinian struggle for their basic rights, and encourages individuals to build support among organisations in their community.

In Ireland, over 100 businesses and other groups have declared themselves to be Apartheid Free, and the number grows every day. At least seven local councils, including Dublin City Council have voted to support BDS. We ask you to support the Palestinian people in their fight for freedom and justice by joining them and saying 'YES TO BDS!'

## **2. Who set up and who supports the AFZ initiative?**

The AFZ campaign is a joint initiative established by the Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Trade Union Friends of Palestine, Jewish Voice for a Just Peace – Ireland, Gaza Action Ireland, Kairos Ireland, Comhlámh Justice for Palestine, Praxis – The Artists' Union of Ireland, Apartheid-Free Arts, and is supported by the Palestinian Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement.

## **3. How can I/we become an AFZ?**

You simply need to log on to the Apartheid Free Zone Website at [www.apartheidfree.ie](http://www.apartheidfree.ie) and use the 'Become an Apartheid Free Zone' form to let us know. If you don't have internet access, you can call the Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign office on 00353 (0)1 8727798 and they can send you out a form. Once signed up, we will provide you with stickers and information sheets, and **add you to the growing list of AFZs** on the [www.apartheidfree.ie](http://www.apartheidfree.ie) website.

## **4. What will my business/group/organisation/etc have to do in order to become an AFZ?**

Whatever your business/group/organisation/space/festival/etc is, becoming an AFZ means that you are pledging to support the principles and tactics of the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement. This means refusing to buy products or services from Israel, or from companies that are complicit in Israeli human rights violations and the occupation of Palestine.

You can read the entire BDS Call from Palestinian civil society online at the following link – [www.bdsmovement.net/call](http://www.bdsmovement.net/call) – but its essence is this:

We, representatives of Palestinian civil society, call upon international civil society organizations and people of conscience all over the world to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era. We appeal to you to pressure your respective states to impose embargoes and sanctions against Israel. We also invite conscientious Israelis to support this Call, for the sake of justice and genuine peace.

These non-violent punitive measures should be maintained until Israel meets its obligation to recognise the Palestinian people’s inalienable right to self-determination and fully complies with the precepts of international law by:

1. Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall
2. Recognizing the fundamental rights of the 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.

## **5. Is there a ‘boycott and avoid’ list?**

The short answer is ‘yes and no’.

In general, you are asked to avoid Israeli products and services when and where possible, as revenue from these helps to fund the occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people. In general, this is a boycott of all Israeli goods and services, not merely those that originate in Israel’s illegal settlements in Palestine – the settlements are merely symptoms of the wider problem of Israeli colonialism and apartheid, and cannot be divorced from the state that creates and sustains them.

You are also asked to refuse any and all funding that may be offered from the Israeli state, or its representatives such as ministries, embassies, universities, state-run cultural funds – including for artistic or humanitarian ventures; the Israeli state often uses cultural and humanitarian work to whitewash its oppression of Palestinians.

You are also asked, where possible and practicable, to avoid using products or

services of any company that the leadership of the Palestinian BDS Movement considers to be a ‘complicit company’, in other words, a multinational company that is profiting from the occupation and colonisation of Palestine.

The nature of global capitalism today, and the successes of our international campaigning work, mean this is an ever evolving list. Thus should any business cease being complicit – as companies such as CRH, Veolia, Orange, G4S, and others have done – we will let all AFZs know as soon as we can. Similarly, we will inform AFZs if other companies move into complicity.

We will provide up-to-date lists as best we can, including when you first sign on.

## **6. I’ve seen lists with almost every multinational in the world saying they ‘support Israel’. Do I have to avoid all these products?**

The BDS Movement does not endorse such maximalist boycott tactics or lists. The reality of global capitalism today means that virtually every multinational or a subsidiary operates in most countries, including in Israel. It would be impossible to boycott all these companies while continuing to lead the kind of life most people lead. BDS advocates strategic boycotts that will help to move the campaign for justice forward. This is why it focuses only on Israeli products and services, and on complicit companies identified by the Palestinian leadership.

Similarly, BDS does not ask you to stop using an item or service simply because one or two items inside it may have originated in Israel.

As Nelson Mandela once said, “boycott is not a principle, but a tactic depending on circumstances”.

## **7. Does this mean I/we have to throw out any stock or items we already own that may breach the guidelines?**

No it does not. This is a misunderstanding of the campaign; we are not asking you to throw out your laptop or printer, your car, your insurance policy, a bag of babywipes or anything else, or indeed to dump stock. What we are asking is that when the time comes to restock, upgrade, or renew something, you make a conscious decision not to purchase from an Israeli or complicit company.

In this scenario, you might also consider writing to the previous supplier and letting them know that you have chosen not to go with them again, or not to purchase that particular item, and outline the reasons why.

## **8. I have a query about something related to AFZ, who can I speak to?**

You can contact us by email at [afz@apartheidfree.ie](mailto:afz@apartheidfree.ie) - or alternatively call the Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign office on 00353 (0)1 8727798. If you can't get us, leave a message and we'll call back.

## **9. Are there any potential negative consequences I/we may face?**

We believe in being honest with supporters. There are potential consequences, though in our opinion and experience they are minimal and short in duration. In the past, Israel lobby groups have activated their online army of trolls and propaganda warriors to launch defamatory attacks on businesses that have declared that they support the BDS movement. In general this has manifested itself as nasty comments and fake reviews being left on social media and review sites, over a short period of time, along with empty threats about 'boycotting the boycotters'.

Ultimately, these had little to no effect on the business or organisation, even in the short term – the Israel lobby doesn't have the power to launch a serious or sustained boycott campaign in Ireland; outside of certain areas in the north of Ireland they are a relatively fringe movement when compared to the widespread public support the Palestinian people enjoy here.

## **10. What can we do to minimise any potential negative consequences?**

There are some steps that can be taken to minimise consequences. The first is actually one that the AFZ campaign steering group itself can take; instead of announcing new AFZs on a one-by-one basis, we first launched with more 200 AFZs. Further announcement updates will take place when we hit new milestones (500, 750, 1,000, etc). This will make it harder for the pro-Israeli Apartheid trolls to focus on single AFZ spaces.

On Facebook, AFZs themselves can disable review features for a short period of time just before and after any public announcement is made. Unfortunately there doesn't appear to be any way to do this on Yelp, Google Reviews, TripAdvisor or Booking.com – however some of these have a feature for reporting fake reviews.

In general though, as we have said, the experience so far has been that these attacks are not frequent, and on the rare occasion they do occur, they are short lived, and have no real effect on businesses or organisations – in fact, contrariwise, declarations of support for Palestine are viewed positively by the majority of the Irish public.

## **11. I've heard that these kinds of boycotts are antisemitic and target Jewish people. Is this true?**

**Absolutely not** – just as boycotts of South Africa were not ‘anti-white’, boycotts of Israel are not ‘anti-Jewish’. Antisemitism, as defined by our colleagues in the Irish Network Against Racism, is “racism or discrimination experienced by people because they are or are perceived to be Jewish or from a Jewish backgrounds.” The BDS movement seeks to pressure the genocidal, apartheid state of Israel into adhering to international law and allowing the Palestinian people to exercise their full inalienable rights – and uses the long-established nonviolent methods of boycotts, divestments and sanctions as the means to apply this pressure.

### ***Complicity, not identity***

The BDS Movement’s focus is not Jewish people, whether as a whole or individually. The BDS Movement explicitly rejects all forms of racism, bigotry and discrimination, including antisemitism and Islamophobia. Many Jewish groups and Jewish people support the BDS Movement, including Jewish-Israelis in the ‘Boycott From Within’ group, Jewish Voice for Peace in the US, and Jewish Vfor Palestine - Ireland, who are endorsers of the Apartheid Free Zones initiative.

The BDS Movement focuses on complicity, *not identity*, and targets are chosen based on their relationship to the Apartheid State of Israel and its ongoing violations of human, civil and democratic rights, and its breaches of international law. From the protests of the Irish Land League – where the word boycott was originally coined – to Ghandi’s anti-British goods boycott, to the Jewish anti-Nazi boycott, to the Montgomery bus boycott, to LGBTQ+ anti-homophobia boycotts and the fossil fuel divestment movement, such tactics have repeatedly been used to attempt to end situations of injustice. Perhaps the most famous, and effective, use of a BDS campaign was the global campaign that helped to bring down the Apartheid regime in South Africa – a campaign after which the Palestinian BDS Movement models itself.

Apartheid Israel’s apologists will often say that the BDS movement ‘singles out’ Israel. In fact, the opposite is true – despite its genocide in Gaza, atrocious human rights record, and constant violations of international law and UN Resolutions, Western governments’ special relationship with Israel ensures that it is ‘singled out’ for protection and impunity. US aid, EU trade agreements and research grants, a thriving arms trade, and friendly diplomatic relationships are the order of the day. No Western state has moved to sanction Israel in any way for its crimes – yet the EU, US and UN have instituted both multilateral and unilateral sanctions against a wide range of countries and other entities, including Palestinian

political and armed groups. There is a fundamental imbalance here that BDS, by mobilising global civil society, seeks to redress.

Of course, this does not mean that the BDS Movement opposes boycotts, etc. of other states, institutions or entities that are involved or complicit in serious human rights and international law violations. It simply means that the Palestinian BDS Movement's goal is the liberation of the Palestinian people and its activities are focused on helping to achieve that goal. There is absolutely nothing stopping individuals, communities, spaces, entities or states engaging in other boycotts of entities they feel merit such action - in fact it is encouraged!

Certainly, owing to (often deliberate) misreporting, some sincere people may be confused about the targets and tactics of the BDS Movement. Overwhelmingly, however, those who make claims about BDS being 'antisemitic' are doing so in an attempt to discredit the movement, and to isolate Israel from both political criticism and effective action to compel it to end its injustices. While not endorsing the BDS Movement, both the EU and the Irish government have stated that BDS, in the words of the Irish government, is a "legitimate political viewpoint" and they do "not agree with attempts to demonize those who advocate this policy."

## **12. Are AFZs against all forms of racism, apartheid and genocide?**

Yes! The global AFZ initiative, and the wider BDS Movement of which is a part, stands in the long tradition of universalist opposition to oppression wherever it occurs. AFZs seek to foster the creation of progressive, intersectional spaces across the world, that are free of Israel's genocide, apartheid and settler colonialism, and which bring together multiple struggles for justice and equality by connecting Palestinian liberation with racial, indigenous, social, queer, anti-war, anti-genocide, and climate justice struggles.

While the primary focus of the AFZ campaign is Palestinian freedom, as noted above, we also positively encourage boycotts of companies that are targets of mobilisations in other struggles of the oppressed. We recommend, where applicable, adopting an ethical investment policy or a universal human rights-based investment screening to prevent engagement with any companies complicit in human rights violations anywhere.

## **13. I've got a question that is not answered here...**

No problem! If your question not answered here, please feel free to contact us by email at [afz@apartheidfree.ie](mailto:afz@apartheidfree.ie) - or alternatively call the Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign office on 00353 (0)1 8727798. If you can't get us, leave a message and we'll call back.



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