



BDS Co-Founder Says Anti-Israel Boycotts Don't Apply to Potential Coronavirus Vaccine

Enemies of Jewish state briefly suspend
anti-Semitism if Israel can save their lives

David Rutz - APRIL 6, 2020

The cofounder of the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which urges a complete boycott of Israeli-made products, encouraged the movement's supporters to seek out one Israel-made product, if it materializes: a vaccine to inoculate them against the coronavirus.

The pandemic has created a dilemma for BDS, a Palestinian-led movement that wages economic warfare on Israel by pressuring other countries to boycott it. Israeli researchers said on Thursday they could begin testing the active component of a potential vaccine by June 1. If successful, the treatment could save countless lives in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israel's assistance, however, would undermine the efforts of BDS supporters to crush Israel's economy.

The leader of the BDS movement, Omar Barghouti, said in a webinar Sunday that it is "not a problem" for movement supporters to use medical equipment from Israel. "Cooperating with Israel against the virus—to begin with, we didn't consider it normalization," Barghouti said in an Arabic language Facebook webinar first reported by the *Jerusalem Post*.

"Normalization" is defined by the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel as "participation in any project, initiative or activity, in Palestine or internationally, that aims (implicitly or explicitly) to bring together Palestinians (and/or Arabs) and Israelis (people or institutions) without placing as its goal resistance to and exposure of the Israeli occupation and all forms of discrimination and oppression against the Palestinian people." That strategy does not extend into health care, according to Barghouti.

"The BDS announced normalization criteria long ago," he said. "If Israel finds a cure for cancer, for example, or any other virus, then there is no problem in cooperating with Israel to save millions of lives."

Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, told the *Washington Free Beacon* that "hypocrisy is the middle name of BDS."

"BDSers are hypocrites just following the examples of Hamas and Palestinian Authority, whose leaders rush to Israeli hospitals when they or their children are suffering, yet pursue zero tolerance for any normal contact with their Israeli neighbors," he said. "Bottom line, BDS is a hypocritical, ideologically inspired anti-Israel campaign."

Roz Rothstein, CEO of the pro-Israel nonprofit StandWithUs, said the scenario exposed the inability of BDS to stick to its ideology and "refuse medical innovations for the Palestinian people."

"This hypocrisy is certainly not unusual for them," Rothstein said. "Although they work hard towards Israel's destruction, they will continue to benefit from Israel's generosity while being dishonest about how Israel regularly helps the Palestinians and the rest of the world."

The Anti-Defamation League calls BDS anti-Semitic for its efforts to delegitimize Israel and deny the Jewish state a right to self-determination. The movement has links to Palestinian terrorist groups, according to investigations by

Israel's Ministry of Strategic Affairs and numerous media outlets.

"It's amazing to see Barghouti claim the BDS movement prioritizes saving lives when Barghouti himself openly advocates terrorism against Israelis," said Jacob Baime, the executive director of the Israel on Campus Coalition. "He wants his life saved by the very people he's trying to eradicate. That's chutzpah."

The BDS Facebook page accused Israel of exploiting Palestinians and of "looting [the] land, arrests, oppression and killing" during the pandemic. Yet the United Nations has praised Israel for its "excellent" cooperation with the Palestinian Authority to combat the coronavirus.

BDS proponents are following the lead of Iranian hardliners, who reassured followers that they could accept a cure originating in Israel. Grand Ayatollah Naser Makarem Shirazi, a top Iranian cleric, said in March that it would be permissible to use an Israeli-manufactured vaccine if there were "no substitute." The leaders of Iran, one of the world's hardest-hit countries by coronavirus, frequently call for Israel's destruction.

"The Ayatollahs will push their way to the front of line for Israeli medicines that will save their own hides even as they threaten genocide," Cooper said.

Top Palestinian officials and their family members have received treatment from Israeli physicians over the years.

Israel reportedly sent a doctor to Ramallah to help save Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas last year from life-threatening ear infection complications. Senior Fatah leader Jibril Rajoub, who spent 15 years in prison for throwing a grenade at an Israeli army bus near Hebron in 1970, was treated in an Israeli hospital in 2019. The daughter of former Hamas prime minister Ismail Haniyeh received medical treatment in Israel following the Gaza War in 2014.

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