



Mondoweiss

News & Opinion About Palestine, Israel & the United States

NEWSLETTERS

Ending Impunity for War Crimes in New York State – Pro-Israel Groups Melt Down – Block the Boat Hits New Jersey

BY [MICHAEL ARRIA](#) - JULY 29, 2021 - 0



PHOTO CREDIT: ANDY RATTO

“It is Outrageous That New York State Actively Shelters, Promotes and Celebrates Such Violence”

No doubt you remember that viral video of American settler Yaakov Fauci telling Muna El Kurd, “If I don’t steal your house, someone else will.”

This week Al-Awda New York: The Palestinian Right to Return Coalition, the National Lawyers Guild, and other activists held an action outside Fauci’s house in East Meadow, Long Island before marching to the Brooklyn office of Attorney General Letitia James to demand action against domestic organizations that help fund Israeli settlement expansion.

“The U.N. Human Rights Commission Rapporteur recently decried settlements as war crimes, and New York private and government actors are actively abetting war crimes, violence and genocide in Palestine with wholesale impunity. This must end if Palestine

and the region can ever see peace,” said attorney Audrey Bomse, a member of Al-Awda New York and the National Lawyers Guild, in a statement.

“It is a violation of U.S. federal law for Americans to engage in war crimes and genocide, it is shocking that there is impunity for such open acts of violence, and it is outrageous that New York State actively shelters, promotes and celebrates such violence, which is itself also a crime,” said attorney Lamis Deek.

The recent Ben & Jerry’s decision was also referenced during the action. “It’s appalling that government officials like DeBlasio are denouncing an ice cream company for partially withdrawing from Israeli-invaded lands while sheltering war criminal organizations right here in New York,” declared Daniel Teehan, a member of Al-Awda New York. “...This will be the first of many actions to demand the closure and prosecution of Israeli apartheid and war crime perpetrators. New Yorkers want our taxes to be used to support our communities here instead of being used to destroy communities and commit high crimes in Palestine.”

Rep. Rashida Tlaib recently sent a [letter](#) to Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen urging the Biden administration to end tax-exempt status for nonprofits that fund illegal Israeli settlements. It was signed by Representatives Cori Bush (D-MO), Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), Andre Carson (D-IN), Mark Pocan (D-WI), Ayanna Pressley (D-MA), and Betty McCollum (D-MN).

“We write to express our extreme concern that U.S. charities are funding and providing direct support to Israeli organizations that are working to expand and perpetuate Israel’s illegal settlement enterprise in violation of international law, including supporting the dispossession and forced displacement of Palestinians from occupied East Jerusalem neighborhoods,” begins the letter. “We are concerned that these policies violate U.S. obligations under international law, as well as federal tax law.”

Pro-Israel Groups Continue to Melt Down

In last week's newsletter we covered some of the unhinged reactions that the Ben & Jerry's announcement generated among lawmakers in Israel and the United States. This week pro-Israel organizations really upped the ante.

The Israeli-American Council flew a banner over Ben & Jerry's factory in Vermont that read, "Serve Ice Cream, Not Hate" and the hashtag #BDSisHATE.



Not to be outdone, the Shurat HaDin Law Center in Tel Aviv say they're going to distribute ice cream in the West Bank under the name "Judea and Samaria's Ben & Jerry's." The organization's president Nitsana Darshan-Leitner sent a [letter](#) to Unilever claiming

“We will now become the lawful owners of the Ben & Jerry’s name in Judea and Samaria.”

“In order to maintain trademark protection against others utilizing your name there must be a bona fide intent to conduct business in a specific region,” it reads. “You have publicly declared that your intent is to sever ties with this specific area evidencing the exact opposite of a bona fide intent to continue.”

“As such, Unilever’s announced boycott of what you call ‘Occupied Palestine,’ but which we understand is ‘a euphemism for areas where Jews live,’ means that Ben & Jerry’s abandoned trademark protections in that territory,” it continues. “We are confident we can expand the business into each and every community in the territory you have abandoned.”

Good luck with that.

Block the Boat Hits New Jersey

We’ve covered “Block the Boat” actions on the website many times. Those protests [target](#) the Haifa-based shipping company ZIM and aim to prevent their cargo ships from offloading.

After Bay Area activists successfully [blocked](#) ZIM from offloading in Oakland last month, I spoke with [Arab Resource and Organizing Center](#) (AROC) executive director Lara Kiswani about the efforts. She explained ZIM’s connection to Israeli apartheid:

ZIM was actually an instrument used in the settler colonial project of the state of Israel. It brought over European settlers to Palestine in 1948. It also historically has exported weaponry from the state of Israel to various parts of the global south, but also to the United States. And in 2014, when we were blockading the ship, the same shipping line was bringing weaponry to ports across the United States to be used against black and brown communities.

This week I spoke with activists Tova Fry and Suzanne Adely about “Block the Boat” protests that recently took place at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Here’s a portion of that interview:

Mondoweiss: You had mentioned that the first pro-Palestine action at a port there occurred last month, in solidarity with the Block the Boat action in Oakland. I wanted to start there. Can you talk about that action, what the scene was like, and how it went?

Tova Fry: The Port of New York and New Jersey is seven container ports. This is the first time, as far as we know, that the Palestine action has happened at the ports. So we knew we had a lot of work to do because nobody had any contacts with the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA). We had only about a week or a week and a half to organize the event.

So we were trying to make contact with the union and finally get support from the union, but also just figure out all the logistics of the action itself. And so, Suzanne and I actually developed a flier to hand out to the longshore people to try to help them understand what we were doing and what we were asking of them. And Suzanne and I went to the port, to the terminal where the employee entrance was a few days before the event to try to flier the workers.

There’s a drive-in entry here which is than the situation in Oakland, where there’s a union hiring hall where you can flier them. So anyway, we were there to try hand out fliers. We had only handed out seven fliers when we were accosted by the terminal’s private security guards. They claimed that we were on private property, so we moved from the curb area we were standing on to the actual street.

We tried to flier there and they told us the whole street was private property and that the cops were on the way. They also claimed that they knew we were coming and that they had alerted Homeland Security. So we decided that rather than resist arrest, we’d go back to our cars. By the time I was pulling out, there were about ten police cars, there was the port’s private security. I noticed they had blocked Suzanne from leaving so I stopped.

Suzanne Adely: At that point we were asking the police whether we were free to leave. Some of them said we had to speak to their Captain and then there were others who used that opportunity to say, "We know what you're up to. We've seen posts about what's going on and we want to let you know that we're watching what you're doing." They were even dropping reference to Homeland Security and counterterrorism agents, just as a way to try and intimidate us. And then there were others that said, "We'll let you go. We just we just need to ask you a few more questions and we'd like to see your identification." They took down our license plate numbers and scanned our IDs.

It was just sort of this very direct and obvious attempt to stop us from reaching out to the workers and just kind of trying to intimidate us from having any kind of action or activity at the port.

Going into that action, we knew that we had to be cautious in terms of our choices, because we we had very specific goals to be able to mobilize a picket in front of the port's gates. But we also knew that there could be a high risk of repression. We always have seasoned activists with us, but we also we also often have community-based folks. We knew that, as Tova explained, we were dealing with private security, Port Authority police, and New Jersey police

We were also aware that there was a federal building in the vicinity, so we didn't know if there was the potential to come into direct conflict with any federal agents. So we were very cautious going in. I terms of it being the first such action in the area, I think we viewed it as highly successful. We were able to mobilize a really good amount of people to come out to a place that was very hard to reach, that was very isolated at 6:00 in the morning, and we were able to mobilize enough numbers that we sort of quickly were able to defy police demands and march to the front of the gates blocking the entrance.

You can read my entire interview with Tova and Suzanne on our website tomorrow.

Odds & Ends