



June 4, 2016

Dear Sisters and Brothers in BFUU,

I want to ask the BFUU community--both its Social Justice Committee, the Board of Trustees and the congregation--to endorse the "**Business Resolution For Occupation Divestment**" now before the UUA GA 2016 in June. (See attached.) This is a motion from the UU Justice In the Mideast - UJME. (See attached) You can read the proposal and all the backup materials at <http://uujme.org/home/> the UJME website. In short we UU's are being asked to support the nonviolent BDS movement to pressure Israel and its supporters to stop its crimes against Palestinians. The UUA has endorsed BDS in part already and will be making it official in June with this resolution.

In addition to this being a matter of justice worldwide because of the long lasting crimes against Palestinians, here in Berkeley and in California we have seen an unprecedented, relentless and successful anti-BDS campaign. Cheryl Davila was fired from the Berkeley Human Welfare and Community Action Commission last fall and a subsequent proposal from the Commission to the Berkeley City Council was defeated. UC Berkeley officials in dealing with reported safety issues with Jewish students wrote a statement that made a close tie between the words, "antisemitism" and "antizionism". Efforts by the UC Berkeley student council to have the UC pass a BDS resolution have been successfully rejected for years, I believe, because BDS has been identified as an Anti-Israel movement, dedicated to the destruction of Israel. (See [Times Of Israel](#) (April 29, 2013).

And now here in California we have a proposal to our legislature, AB2844, a measure that would penalize businesses that support BDS against Israel. [Senator Marty Block \(D-San Diego\)](#) "today announced that the California Legislative Jewish Caucus, which he chairs, will support a measure to ban state contracts with any company participating in a boycott of Israel." (April 5, 2016). According to emails from Jewish Voice For Peace (Oakland) which has been soliciting petition signers against AB2844 this is where it stands: " *In Suspense, That's where AB 2844, the anti-free speech, anti-BDS bill JVP and partners have been fighting for the last two months, sits today. And it means we have a real chance of defeating the thing entirely.*"

The same forces that have been fighting against BDS are working hard to get UU's to oppose it. See the article from Miriam Elman, April 16, 2016 in [Legal Insurrection](#), "Unitarian-Universalist Association Joins Anti-Israel Divestment Effort". In this posting the UJME is described as "a virulently anti-Israel subgroup within the UU." The following groups which we in the Bay Area have supported are named as "virulently anti-Israel": like Kairos Palestine and Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center and its U.S. based affiliates, Friends of Sabeel North America--FOSNA. They argue that again this is a movement that seeks the destruction of Israel, one that totally is blind to the atrocities foisted on Christians by anti-Christian groups in Palestine and the Mid-East.

Finally this posting by Miriam Elman singles out the **Jewish Voice For Peace-JVP**. She points out that JVP has been working for the passage of the UJME resolution, even circulating a petition and providing educational materials to help UU's understand and support the resolution. "**So now JVP will again provide the critical cover for any hesitant UUs, allowing the UJME to falsely portray their divestment measure to those members as something "many Jews" endorse.**" JVP locally and nationally has been being attacked for its pro BDS stance.

In 2002 Archbishop Desmond Tutu called for the international community to make divestment from Israel a weapon in the struggle for justice. ((International Herald Tribune, June 14, 2002).) In 2007 as reported by Gene Herman, multiple organizations in the Bay Area called on the US to institute a peace congress for Israeli-Palestinian Peace. Where is this peace movement at? Is BDS appropriate?

Here is what Amanda Weatherspoon, seminarian at Starr King and speaker at BFUU says: "Our faith is founded on the premise of a self-determined, just, and sustainable world. We cannot obtain that if we are turning a blind eye to the prolonged occupation of the Palestinian people." Rev. Dr. George "Kim" Beach, retired UU Minister says: "Divestment is not covert anti-Semitism and not part of a plot to "destroy the state of Israel," as Prime Minister Netanyahu claims. It is part of an effort to save Israel from the long-term self-destructive consequences of an endless occupation". (See UJME current newsletter at <http://uujme.org/home/Our-Work/Newsletter>)

As we UU's head toward this year's GA of 2016, it will be important for all congregations to endorse the "**Business Resolution For Occupation Divestment**".

Thank you. Tom Luce

NOTE: The Social Justice Committee passed the motion unanimously on June 5, 2016. "Moved that the SJC endorse the "Business Resolution For Occupation Divestment" now before the UUA GA 2016 in June.