Why boycotting Israeli apartheid follows South Africa’s liberation strategy

OUR OBJECTIVE IS TO ADVANCE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE BY DEVELOPING CRITICAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT, FOR AND IN DIALOGUE WITH CIVIL SOCIETY THROUGH TEACHING, RESEARCH AND PUBLISHING.
‘one person, one vote
in a unitary state’
(traditional liberation movement
demand, successful on 27 April 1994)
racial-apartheid ‘Swiss cheese’ geography of white (and ‘Indian’ and ‘coloured’) areas, with bantustans for rural black Africans
What is the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement?

Modeled after global actions taken against South Africa during its apartheid era, a majority of Palestinian civil society in 2005 called upon international civil society organizations and people of conscience all over the world to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel until it complies with international law. The BDS movement is both a grassroots movement springing organically from the soil of Palestine itself and an international movement in which all can participate and show solidarity with Palestinians regardless of where they may be in the world.
What is the BDS movement?
The three demands of the movement are that Israel terminate the occupation of all lands occupied in 1967, including the dismantling of the wall and the illegal Jewish-only colonies in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, uphold the right of return of Palestinian refugees as stipulated and guaranteed by international law, and end its system of institutionalized racism and segregation against Palestinian citizens of Israel. BDS has been endorsed by over 170 Palestinian parties, organizations, trade unions and movements representing the Palestinian people in the 1967 and 1948 territories and in the diaspora and has been gaining international adherents since its inception.
apartheid South Africa and apartheid Israel: ten parallels

• white minorities;
• planned colonization;
• strategic assets for the British empire;
• pro-US foreign policy;
• elites self-perceived as islands of Western culture within backward, hostile environment;

• similar economic institutions: concentrated market structures, heavy state involvement, and labour market segmentation along racial/ethnic lines;
• economic development of both countries unfolded within framework of ‘war economy’ - recurring armed conflicts, large military and internal security budgets and major weapon development programmes
• [add: dominance of relatively patriotic bourgeoisies]
• [add: ‘superexploitative’ _historical_ basis for race/nation-class-gender-geographical configuration, including border industrial zones]
• [add: turn to neoliberal globalisation]
Post-apartheid (1994) SA (and restructuring Palestine?)

- neoliberal macroeconomic policy and relations with world economy (free trade, high interest rates, liberalised exchange controls and finance, foreign direct investment deregulation, tightening fiscal policy)
- ‘homegrown’ but donor-massaged (WB, US, Canada, EU)
- relative strength of finance, trade, telecommunications, construction
- rising unemployment, inequality

- socio-economic rights narrative
- social policy (‘indigency’ and tokenistic welfarism)
- decentralisation, fragmentation
- neoliberal microdevelopmental policies and practices (pricing, service levels, disciplining)
- Public-Private Partnerships, privatisation, ‘commodification of everything’
- environmental management through ‘ecological modernisation’ (pollution, water, energy, climate and carbon trading)
Khulumani charges Daimler, IBM, Ford, GM and RheinMetall in court for supporting & profiting from Apartheid.

We demand reparations for crimes against humanity.

Daimler sponsors German Football to 2016 instead.
declining SA manufacturing profit rate

Rate of Profit (as % of capital stock)

depth-rooted capitalist stagnation due to ‘overaccumulation crisis’ (and then 1985 banking crisis) finally responsible for late 1980s break between white Johannesburg capital and racist Pretoria government

pre-1994 roots of neoliberalism: *unilateral late-apartheid regime shift*

1) sanctions bite English-speaking business, 1985;
2) F.W. DeKlerk transferred power from ‘securocrats’ to ‘econocrats’ by 1989;
3) inward-oriented siege economy – state investments, border industrial zones, subsidies, low interest rates – phased out, late 1990s;
4) IMF macroeconomic advice adopted, 1989;
5) longest depression in SA history, 1989-93;
6) Iscor (state iron company) privatised, 1989;
7) Value Added Tax installed, 1991;
8) Normative Economic Model adopted, 1993;
1990-94 roots of neoliberalism: African National Congress technocrats co-opted

1) more than a dozen World Bank ‘reconnaissance missions’ (‘Knowledge Bank’) from 1990-94 in all sectoral areas (ANC made radical Mass Democratic Movement allies cooperate);

2) ANC allowed intermediary agencies like Anglo American Corporation’s Urban Foundation thinktank and the Development Bank of Southern Africa to play crucial role in shaping transition in hotly contested fields like housing, water, energy, land, healthcare and education;

3) October 1993 agreement to repay apartheid debt - $25 billion in foreign loans from commercial banks, and somewhat more domestically – prevented subsequent ANC government from social spending;
4) **Interim Constitution** in November 1993 assured property rights and ‘independent’ Reserve Bank (i.e. banker-biased, democracy-insulated);

5) **International Monetary Fund** set the stage for other neoliberal economic policies – e.g. public sector wage and spending cuts – as condition for December 1993 $850 mn loan;

6) IMF manager Michel Camdessus told Nelson Mandela to **reappoint apartheid-era finance minister** (Derek Keys) **and central bank governor** (Chris Stals).
‘post’-apartheid neoliberal consolidation

1) General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (soon became the World Trade Organisation) hit South Africa hard in mid-1994, as fast-declining manufacturing protection reversed the anticipated gains of liberation for workers;

2) in early 1995, dissolution of the dual exchange rate system (a ‘financial rand’ used to deter international capital flight during the prior decade) and encouragement of stock market investment by international finance meant a huge inflow;

3) then, on five separate occasions in the subsequent fifteen years, dramatic outflows and currency crashes of at least 25%;

4) first of these runs, in February 1996, followed a rumour (unfounded) that Mandela was ill, and left the president and his team so psychologically shaken that they ditched their last left vestige, the Reconstruction and Development Programme ministry, and within four months imposed macroeconomic ‘Growth, Employment and Redistribution’ neoliberal policies.
class-apartheid ‘Swiss cheese’ geography of formerly white areas and former bantustans: correlation of bantustans to current poverty and state service shortages.
necessary prerequisite: protest - from racial apartheid...

a scene from Soweto, 1976
... to class apartheid

a few kms from Soweto, a scene from Riverlea, next to Soccer City, October 2009
ubiquitous ‘service delivery protests’
South African campaigns for decommodification, destratification and the deglobalization of capital

• SA activists turning several ongoing struggles to turn basic needs into human rights:
  – free antiretroviral medicines;
  – National Health Insurance;
  – free water (50 liters/person/day);
  – free electricity (at least 1 kWh/c/d);
  – thorough-going land/housing reform;
  – free basic education;
  – renationalisation of Telkom for lifeline phone services;
  – prohibition on services disconnections and evictions;
  – a 'Basic Income Grant'; and
  – the right to a job!

• as ‘non-reformist reforms’, all such services should be universal, partly financed by penalizing luxury consumption.

• interlocking/overlapping campaigns – but so far not unified due to macropolitical conjuncture (especially rise of ANC Zuma faction)
the ongoing struggle against neoliberalism