Organizing for self-determination, ethical de-Zionization and resisting apartheid

Omar Barghouti

Researcher, human rights activist, Palestinian Civil Society Campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)

This paper argues for a secular, democratic state in historic Palestine as the most morally coherent solution to the century-old colonial conflict because it offers the best hope for reconciling the inalienable right of the indigenous Palestinians to self-determination and the acquired rights of the colonial settlers to live in peace and security, individually and collectively. Accepting colonists as equal citizens and full partners in building and developing a new shared society is the most magnanimous offer any oppressed indigenous population can present to its oppressors, but for such to be attained, settlers must shed colonial privileges and character, accept justice, unmitigated equality, and conscious integration into the region. Building a just and lasting peace anchored in international law and universal human rights, conducive to ethical coexistence requires the ethical decolonization, or de-Zionization of historic Palestine. Such a process is premised on a revitalized, democratized Palestinian civil resistance movement with a clear vision for a shared, just society and effective worldwide support for reaffirming Palestinian rights and ending Israel’s violations of international law and universal rights. By emphasizing the equality of humanity as its most fundamental principle, this paper shows that the proposed secular democratic state promises to transcend national and ethnic dichotomies that now make it nearly impossible to envision reaching any just solution to the most intricate questions.

Keywords: de-Zionization; ethical de-colonization; Nakbah; Israeli apartheid; PLO; boycott divestment sanctions (BDS); bi-nationalism; secular democratic state; ethical coexistence

Introduction

In her childhood in Safad, situated on the highest hill in the north of Palestine, my late grandmother’s best friend was Sarah, as she once told me. When Sarah’s mother gave birth to her she was not able to breastfeed, so my great grandmother volunteered to do so in her stead, as was the tradition among neighbours at the time. This made Sarah, according to Arab culture, almost a sister of my grandmother’s. My grandmother never thought of Sarah as different, except during some days of the year when Sarah’s family had some ‘peculiar’ feasts. Only in 1948 was my grandmother confronted with the fact that Sarah’s family was ‘Jewish’, a term that had not been understood by her, and that they cheered as her own family was dispossessed. In a few months my grandmother lost not only her spacious home with its vast garden in Safad, but also her best friend and her very faith in coexistence. Shortly before passing away, at the last stage
of a futile battle with Alzheimer’s, she reminisced about Safad, about the lemon trees and, again, about playing with Sarah.

Not all Palestinians will suffer from Alzheimer’s, forget the Nakbah, and dream of coexistence. The obligatory process needed to achieve ethical coexistence in Palestine can only result from ethical decolonization of Palestine; it can only emanate from justice, freedom, equality and self-determination, not amnesia, whether natural or coerced.

Organizing for self-determination and ethical de-Zionization of Palestine must proceed in two simultaneous, dialectically related processes: reflection and action, to borrow from the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (Freire 1993).

Ethical decolonization, anchored in international law and universal human rights, is a profound process of transformation that requires, above everything else, a sophisticated, principled and popular Palestinian resistance movement with a clear vision for justice coupled with a democratic, inclusive society, and an international movement supporting Palestinian rights and struggling to end all forms of Zionist apartheid and colonial rule. Without vision and reflection, our struggle is liable to become like a ship without a captain. Without resistance, our vision will amount to no more than armchair intellectualism, if not irrelevant sophistry.

The main challenge facing advocates of a democratic one-state solution in historic Palestine, after striving to win the endorsement of a solid Palestinian majority behind it, is to convince international mass organizations, progressive leaders of political thought, cultural figures, trade unions, faith-based organizations, women’s movements, students, academics, among others that: (1) it is a morally compelling, just vision that is worth the struggle, even if a snapshot of reality today might suggest it is almost impossible to attain; and (2) that this vision can, indeed, be realized through ethically sound and politically effective processes. While significant progress has been made on the first front, very little has been done on the second, in demarcating the path, and describing the vehicle that can take us there. Therefore, our task here is meticulously to examine the two ‘Vs’: vision and vehicle.

The vision: ethical de-Zionization

A secular, democratic state in British Mandate Palestine is, in my perspective, the most just and morally coherent solution to the century-old colonial conflict, primarily because it offers the greatest potential for reconciling the ostensibly irreconcilable – the inalienable rights of the indigenous Palestinians, particularly the right to self-determination, and the acquired rights of the colonial settlers to live in peace and security, individually and collectively, but only after being decolonized, as will be explained below.

Among the most often discussed alternatives to resolving the question of Palestine, the democratic state solution lays out the clearest mechanism for ending the three-tiered regime of injustice that Palestinians have suffered from since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 on the ruins of Palestinian society: the occupation and colonization of the Palestinian territory conquered by Israel in 1967; the system of institutionalized and legalized racial discrimination, or apartheid, to which the indigenous Palestinian citizens of Israel are subjected on account of their being ‘non-Jews’; and the persistent denial of the United Nations-sanctioned rights of the Palestine refugees, especially their right to return to their homes of origin and to reparations. A two-state solution cannot adequately, if at all, address the second injustice or the
third – the core of the question of Palestine. A bi-national solution, also, other than its inherent logical and legal flaws, cannot accommodate the right of return as stipulated in UNGA Resolution 194, not to mention the fact that it infringes, by definition, upon the inalienable rights of the indigenous Palestinians on part of their homeland – particularly the right to self-determination. Recognizing national rights of Jewish settlers in Palestine cannot but imply acceptance of their right to self-determination. Other than contradicting the very letter, spirit and purpose of the universal principle of self-determination primarily as a means for ‘peoples under colonial or alien domination or foreign occupation’ to realize their rights, this acceptance may, at one extreme, lead to claims for secession or Jewish ‘national’ sovereignty on part of the land of Palestine. A Jewish state in Palestine, no matter what shape it takes, cannot but infringe upon the basic rights of the land’s indigenous Palestinian population and perpetuate a system of racial discrimination that ought to be opposed categorically.

Accepting the colonial settlers as equal citizens and full partners in building and developing a new shared society, free from all colonial subjugation and discrimination, as called for in the democratic state model, is the most magnanimous offer any indigenous population, oppressed for decades, can present to its oppressors. For such a reality to be attained and sustained, however, the settlers must shed their colonial character and privileges and accept justice, the Palestinian refugees’ return and reparations, and unmitigated equality. The indigenous population, on the other hand, must be ready, after justice has been served and rights have been restored, to forgive and to accept the settlers as equal citizens, enjoying normal lives – neither as masters nor slaves.

As the One State Declaration,2 issued by several Palestinian, Israeli and international intellectuals and activists, states:

The historic land of Palestine belongs to all who live in it and to those who were expelled or exiled from it since 1948, regardless of religion, ethnicity, national origin or current citizenship status; a system of government must be founded on the principle of equality in civil, political, social and cultural rights for all citizens. Power must be exercised with rigorous impartiality on behalf of all people in the diversity of their identities ….

Feasibility aside, there are several key issues that ought to be scrutinized when raising the slogan of a ‘Democratic State in Historic Palestine’. For the most part, these revolve around whether such a vision purports to deal with the questions listed below. Any exhaustive answer will undoubtedly demand massive research; I shall only propose, then, brief answers that lay out the morally consistent principles I believe are required to address the issues, keeping in mind, throughout, the pre-eminence of the principles of de-colonization and reparations, as minimal conditions for achieving relative justice.

**Equal and democratic citizenship**

What does it mean, and to whom does it extend in the proposed state? How can ‘One person, one vote’ be applied ethically, justly and without prejudice?

Equal and democratic citizenship precludes any privileged status for citizens on account of their ethnic, religious or other forms of identity – beyond the initial requirements of justice and reparations for the dispossessed Palestinians. This citizenship encompasses all Palestinians inside historic Palestine and those in exile and refugee camps as well as all current Jewish Israelis. Minority rights must be protected by law
against the majority’s potentially hegemonic tendencies. The following principle, proposed in a different context by the prominent Israeli philosopher, Marcelo Dascal (Dascal 2003, pp. 150–166), can be applied constructively in this regard: ‘[T]he majority has an obligation to avoid as much as possible the identification of the state’s framework with traits that preclude the possibility of the minority’s commitment to it.’ This principle, however, should not pre-empt or prevent the application of restitutional justice to the indigenous Palestinians.

**The right of return and reparation for Palestinian refugees**

How can repatriation and reparation be implemented in such a state? What should be done with current Jewish-Israeli inhabitants/occupants of Palestinian lands and homes illegally expropriated since the 1948 Nakbah?

The general rule, as stipulated in international law, is the right of every Palestinian refugee to return to his/her home of origin and to receive full, retroactive reparations. Compensation for suffering endured by refugees for decades and for the illegal use of their property is an integral and necessary component of any just and ethical scheme of reparations. All this must be done while avoiding the infliction of any unnecessary or disproportionate suffering on the Jewish community in Palestine. There is a need, then, to make a distinction between two types of pillaged property: (1) private or collectively owned property; and (2) property that was designated as state owned before the Nakbah.

In the first case, private and collectively owned property, in accordance with international law, should be returned to its rightful owners. When doing so is reasonably expected to cause unjust harm to a large number of citizens – fair criteria need to be developed, inspired by similar ones adopted in Bosnia and elsewhere, to determine the degree of harm and the number of those affected which ought to be considered unjust – compensation in the form of property of comparable location and worth should be offered to the original owners. If returning a house to its Palestinian owners entails finding alternative housing for the Jewish family currently occupying it, that is a fair settlement to reach. But when the land owned by a Palestinian family hosts today buildings with hundreds of Jewish and/or other families, every effort must be made to convince the dispossessed victims to accept appropriate monetary and land compensation. Again, clear rules must be set to deliberate such cases in the most just and transparent manner.

In cases where entire villages have been destroyed and buildings were constructed in their place, the state should offer the descendants of those dispossessed village communities land of comparable size, worth and location to rebuild their community, should they so choose. The land swap parameters being discussed in the current so-called Palestinian–Israeli negotiations do not fulfil any requirement of justice and, therefore, cannot be seriously considered in this analysis.

In any case, a special claims court must be set up to deal with disputes arising from the possibility of the original owners refusing the offered state compensation and insisting on retrieving their land. To this end, the established reparation schemes set up for Jewish victims of the Holocaust set clear elaborate rules and principles that can and should be emulated in reparation models for Palestinian refugees. In the second case – that of state-owned property, current buildings and structures can remain intact, provided they benefit all the democratic state’s citizenry, without discrimination.
The Jewish community in a democratic Palestine

Has a ‘national Jewish-Israeli identity’ evolved over the past six decades? If yes, who is included in it? Regardless of this, to what community or collective rights are Jewish Israelis entitled in the new ‘democratic Palestine’ – if that should be the name the majority might opt for?

Bi-nationalists base their vision of a shared future on the premise that there are two nations in historic Palestine vying for the same territory; they fail, however, to define the second nation. According to the UNESCO-endorsed ‘Kirby definition’, a people, besides enjoying common features of history, identity, culture, language, etc., ‘must have the will to be identified as a people or the consciousness of being a people’. This subjective element is considered a necessary condition that is lacking in the case of Jewish Israelis, who predominantly recognize only a ‘Jewish nation’, not an Israeli, or even a Jewish-Israeli nation. The Israeli Supreme Court refuses to recognize Israeli nationality as well. Jewish ‘nationality’, as embodied in the Israeli Law of Return, is an extraterritorial construct that includes the entire population of Jews around the world, in contravention of international public law norms pertaining to nationality.4

Regardless whether or not Israeli Jews regard themselves, or can be regarded by others, as a nation, the right to self-determination, as understood and applied in United Nations conventions and successive resolutions, cannot apply to them as a settler-colonial community living in colonized territory, particularly that which came into existence through the ethnic cleansing of the native population, a most severe demographic crime that has undermined the Palestinians’ right to self-determination. Recognizing the settlers’ right to self-determination would directly infringe the inalienable right to self-determination of the colonized, indigenous population, in the interest of whom the principle of self-determination was adopted and protected as a top priority by the UN. Still, the settlers’ collective rights in the cultural, linguistic, religious and other civic and social domains must be protected in the envisioned democratic state so long as these rights do not infringe upon the inalienable rights of the indigenous Palestinians.

The Zionist ‘Law of return’

What would happen to it? What are the rights of Jewish refugees from Arab and other states? Being an explicitly racist law that is in contravention of international law and one that has played a key role in the Zionist settler-colonial project, the Law of Return and all other similarly discriminatory laws must be abrogated in a democratic state. There should not be any tolerance for any laws that espouse and embody racial discrimination. Jewish relatives of Israelis should enjoy the right to be unified with their families in Palestine if they so wish, according to a transparent and just law. Jewish foreigners who are not in this category, however, should not enjoy any privileges over any other foreigners as far as immigration criteria are concerned. They should be treated fairly like every other applicant, whether Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, or from any other group that may feel a historic or spiritual connection to Palestine.

As for Jewish refugees from Arab states, they are entitled, according to international law, to the same rights as refugees everywhere, including Palestinian refugees: the right to repatriation and reparation. They enjoy these rights whether or not they wish to exercise them. In any case, no linkage between those rights and the rights of Palestinian refugees should be made, logically, legally or morally. Both refugee communities have separate but equivalent rights to return to their respective homes of
origin and to receive just compensation. No trade off should even be contemplated, especially since a refugee’s right is—above everything else—an inalienable individual right that cannot be usurped or appropriated by any political authority.

**Jewish colonies/settlements**

What would be their fate in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem)? Upon realizing the one-state initiative, would there still remain a distinction between these colonies and other Jewish population blocs in the 1948 areas and if so why? Does accepting the continued habitation of immigrant Jews in Palestine—in the context of a secular democratic state—entail their right to live in Hebron, Jerusalem’s Old City and Nablus and why? Does passage of time confer legitimacy on otherwise illegitimate colonial acts?

As stated above, in dealing with reparations for Palestinian refugees, the same distinction between public property and private or communal property should apply here as well. A Jewish colony by any other name, whether in the Galilee, Jerusalem, the Naqab or Hebron, built on private Palestinian lands must be evacuated, with the settlers being given alternative, comparable housing by the state, unless the original Palestinian owners agree to receive proper land and monetary compensation, as discussed above. If the harm inflicted on the current residents is disproportionate, but the owners nevertheless refuse to accept compensation, again a specialized, impartial court should be the last, decisive resort to resolve the conflict. If a settlement is on public lands, it can continue to exist, given that it is open to all citizens without discrimination. All other damages and illegal usage of resources committed by settlers, as individuals or collectives, must be legally pursued and settled according to the law.

**Jerusalem and religious pluralism**

Should the state be avowedly secular? How will the intricate issue of religion(s) be addressed? Can secularism coupled with respect for the widest possible religious freedom solve this issue? I fully subscribe to the clause in the One State Declaration dealing with this sensitive subject, which calls for: ‘The creation of a non-sectarian state that does not privilege the rights of one ethnic or religious group over another and that respects the separation of state from all organized religion; ….’

**Ethnic and cultural particularities of Palestinian Arabs and Jewish Israelis**

How much of a cultural autonomy can be tolerated? How can cultural domination be avoided? Cultural particularity and identity should not only be tolerated but nourished by society and protected by law. For centuries, Palestine was a fertile meeting ground for diverse civilizations and cultures, fostering communication, dialogue and acculturation among them. This heritage, almost forgotten under the cultural hegemony of Zionist colonial rule, must be revived, actively encouraged and celebrated, regardless of any power asymmetry in the new state.

**National and civic identity of the new state**

Is it necessary and could this state belong to the Arab Nation? How? While Palestine cannot but belong to its regional cultural and historical context, which is predominantly Arab, its national or civic identities, if any, should not preclude its non-Arab citizens.
The same should apply to other Arab countries, like Morocco, Iraq, Sudan, Algeria, Lebanon and others, where diverse ethnic and cultural groups coexist. Samāh Idrīs, a distinguished progressive Lebanese intellectual and literary editor, has worked for years on developing a new concept of Arabism that is inclusive, tolerant of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity, and respectful of human and individual rights. In a sense, Arabism would lose any exclusivist national attributes – which reduce it to a closed ethnicity – and embrace more permeable, flexible and accommodating identity: attributes that permit multiculturalism and participatory democracy to function. Edward Said once proposed a ‘hybrid identity’ for the new state. Cuba, South Africa, and Ireland provide inspiring examples of such a new, inclusive identity.

Regardless of the above vital components of the vision, perhaps the most nagging question that one state advocates face is whether our vision is feasible, whether it can be realized, and, if yes, how? Many commentators and analysts, even among supporters of the one state solution, seem to be obsessed with one question in this regard: how might one convince Israelis to accept this vision?

**The vehicle: resistance and solidarity**

In the early 19th century, a French reformist faction of the Left proposed ending bourgeois exploitation of the proletariat through persuasion. Two centuries later, there are still many who propose quite the same historically discredited idea to end Israel’s colonial oppression of the Palestinian people. If Israel has so systematically and relentlessly crushed the foundations of a mini-state within the 1967 territories, the argument is in essence how can we allay the fears of Jewish Israelis and convince them to accept a unitary, democratic state over the entire area of historic Palestine, which would effectively end Israel’s existence *qua* a Jewish state? There is a basic problem in the assumed premise in this question: that a colonial society can or should be persuaded to give up its domination and colonial privileges. Throughout the history of colonialism, the colonized were only able to end their oppression through sustained resistance, whether armed, civil, or both – never through begging, appeasing or otherwise persuading through ‘dialogue’.

So the question should be reformulated as such: Is it possible to struggle internally and externally to de-Zionize, or negate the Zionist colonial character of, what is now essentially a unified state as the South African masses, supported by an immense international coalition, did when they succeeded in abolishing apartheid? My answer is an unqualified yes.

Besides developing and effectively promoting a morally consistent and compelling vision, organizing for a secular, democratic state alternative primarily entails developing a corresponding strategy of resistance aimed at ending all forms of Zionist oppression while creating fertile grounds for future reconciliation and peaceful coexistence based on unmitigated equality, justice and universal human rights. This is what I call the ethical de-Zionization/decolonization of Palestine, a process that entails a de-dichotomization of the two main groups’ identities involved in this colonial conflict.

Moral reconciliation between conflicting subjects is impossible if the essence of the oppressive relationship between them is sustained. The objectively contradictory identities of the oppressor and oppressed cannot find a moral middle ground. So long as the relation of oppression obtains, coercion, submission and injustice are the only possible outcomes. Reconciliation and coexistence, then, can only result from ethical decolonization.
Resistance
What form of resistance and action is needed to bring us closer to realizing the secular, democratic state solution? I think there are three central pillars on which a Palestinian-led, one democratic state movement needs to be founded.

The Palestinian Pillar
The main vehicle that can carry this process forward must be a unified, democratized and revolutionary Palestinian movement that represents Palestinians everywhere, includes all political parties and grassroots unions and institutions, upholds the democratic state vision, and leads the resistance, in all its forms, to achieve it. A progressive Palestinian movement upholding equality, universal principles of morality and international law is more crucial than ever, particularly given the steadily growing disillusion with the two-state solution among Palestinians, among all three segments – those in exile, those in the 1967-occupied Palestinian territory and those inside Israel.

The right of return movement, representing the largest Palestinian constituency – the refugees – has been among the most fervent of supporters of the one democratic state solution, realizing that the right of return and the two-state solution are basically incompatible. Palestinian citizens of Israel, in the three historic documents issued by leading institutions, political leaders and intellectuals among them, have largely adopted the slogan of ‘a state of all its citizens,’ which lends credence to the one-state vision approach and principles. Even Palestinians in the OPT, recent polls reveal, have been expressing a steadily growing support for one state, despite the fact that no political party is calling for it.

A thorough and critical reassessment of the entire Palestinian strategy of resistance is urgently needed, in order to creatively mobilize Palestinians from all sectors and geographic locations in the struggle. To this end, promoting civil resistance, as in the campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, or BDS, is a top priority.

The PLO needs to be reconstructed from the bottom up with mass participation, particularly by democratic grassroots unions; it must be governed by unfettered democracy, upholding the principle of proportional representation. Since this slogan remains today a far-fetched goal, Palestinians everywhere need to take the initiative and launch a democratic takeover of the PLO, by freely electing local leaderships in organizations and unions representing Palestinian women, students, teachers, workers, intellectuals, and others, without waiting for any instructions or ‘green light’ from ‘above.’ These mass movements can then assert their influence as representatives of large constituencies and play a key role in reconstructing the PLO’s leadership structures.

The leadership of the Palestinian citizens of Israel is an inspiring example. Excluded by Israel and the PLO leadership from the very definition of the people of Palestine for two decades, they have now reaffirmed the fact that they are an organic component of the Palestinian people that is entitled to take part in exercising the right to self-determination. It is worth noting that, during Israel’s aggression against Gaza this past January, Palestinians in Israel organized what must be one of the largest demonstrations in Palestinian history, with close to 150,000, that is more than 10% of the entire community, standing together against Israel’s war crimes.
The Arab Pillar

Any reading of the history of the Arab region tells us that transformations cannot happen in one part without the maturity of requisite pre-disposing conditions in its surrounding context. Being part of the Arab nation, with all its geo-strategic importance, is one of the basic factors that spared the Palestinians the fate of Native Americans. And, although most Arab regimes today are autocratic, despotic, unrepresentative of their respective peoples, and mostly reliant for their survival on Western protection, the Arab masses are more aware of and committed to the Palestinian struggle than ever, as evident in the – mostly emotional – outpouring of support during the criminal Israeli criminal war of aggression on Gaza.

The Palestinian factor is largely regarded as a domestic factor, not just in the countries surrounding Palestine, but also in Arab countries as far away as Morocco, Yemen and the United Arab Emirates. The emergence of a Palestinian leadership that advocates a democratic state solution, therefore, has every potential to mobilize wider Arab grassroots support, eventually becoming a political force with which to be reckoned. Already, boycott of Israel and of companies that are viewed as perpetuating its oppression is spreading throughout the Arab world, albeit without an organized leadership, for the most part. The so-called ‘peace dividend’ that Israel has banked on since Oslo without conceding any land or rights in return is quickly disappearing. Israel is again being viewed as the Arab nation’s strategic enemy and as an inherently belligerent, artificial entity whose existence as a racist and colonial outpost cannot be tolerated or normalized.

The International Pillar

As in the struggle against South African apartheid, connecting the struggle for Palestinian rights with international social movements, trade unions, faith-based organizations, cultural and academic groups, among other civil society bodies, is indispensable. If international civil society solidarity groups committed to BDS to isolate Israel have started to emerge ever since the UN World Conference Against Racism in Durban in 2001, now, four years after the Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS was launched, these groups are starting to look and act like a movement that is guided by the Palestinian Call and that is taking root in several countries, from South Africa to Sweden, and from Australia to Canada, not to forget the United Kingdom, of course.

This resolutely anti-racist, diverse movement is guided by the principles of inclusion, gradualness, sustainability, context-sensitivity and the primacy of international law and universal human rights. And, although the West – owing to its overwhelming political and economic power as well as its complicity in perpetuating Israel’s colonial and apartheid domination – remains the main battleground for this non-violent resistance, the rest of the world should not be ignored. The boycott movement should reach China, India, Malaysia, Brazil, and Russia, among other states which seek to challenge the West’s monopoly on power where Zionist influence remains significantly weaker. Indeed, South African civil society is today the single most committed supporter of the Palestinian BDS struggle.

Can BDS change anything on the ground, though, given Israel’s formidable influence over Congress, the White House and – by extension – the European Union? The still-young Palestinian BDS campaign, modelled after the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, has already shown ample evidence that it has the potential of unifying
Palestinians and international solidarity movements in a resistance strategy that is moral, effective and sustainable. In the last few years alone, many mainstream and influential groups, unions and institutions have heeded the Palestinian BDS Call and started to consider or apply diverse forms of effective pressure on Israel. During and ever since Israel’s war on Gaza, Palestinian civil society has stood more united than ever in urging people of conscience all over the world to hold Israel accountable for its crimes by treating it as South Africa was under apartheid rule. In response, unions, academic groups, faith-based organizations, political parties, social movements and others have adopted creative, context-sensitive and sustainable BDS campaigns, from South Africa to Norway, from Australia to Canada, from Britain to Venezuela, and even from the podium of the President of the UN General Assembly.

Israel’s state terrorism in Gaza, enabled by virtually unlimited support from the US and Western governments in general, was a key catalyst in spreading and deepening BDS around the world, prompting advocates of Palestinian rights to feel that our South Africa moment has finally arrived. Israel is now widely perceived, at a grassroots level, as an international pariah that commits war crimes with impunity and that needs to be held accountable to international law and basic principles of human rights.

With every achievement that the BDS movement charts, the long path to the one democratic state solution becomes shorter. After all, although the BDS movement has never taken sides in the one-state/two-states debate, being a rights-based movement, the only solution that can logically accommodate the three basic rights stated in the BDS Call is a one democratic state solution. The spread of the compelling BDS message around the world is inspiring new sectors in international civil society to join the struggle for Palestinian rights; it is quite effectively raising awareness about Israel’s three-tiered system of oppression of the Palestinian people; and it is unintentionally convincing many that a democratic, unitary state is the only one worth fighting for. The latest, spectacular entrenchment of the BDS campaign, especially since the Israeli aggression against Gaza, gives us hope that one day Israel’s impunity and Western, UN and Arab collusion with it will come to an end, allowing the processes of transformation in Palestine and the region to prevail. Only thus can ethical coexistence have a real chance of being realized. Only then will the human bond between my grandmother and her childhood best friend, Sarah, seem less utopian and appear more normal.

Notes
1. Even human rights reports issued by the US State Department have condemned Israel’s ‘institutional, legal and societal discrimination’ against the indigenous Palestinians. For example, see the 2008 report at: http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/nea/119117.htm/.
2. See http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article9134.shtml/.
3. Dascal proposes this as a current principle that Israel and its Palestinian citizens ought to uphold as a means of alleviating the conflict between the two identities in opposition. This same principle, however, can be quite useful if applied to the future of a unitary state.
4. For more on this, see Global BDS Movement (2008).
7. See http://www.BDSmovement.net/.
8. For more on this, see http://www.palestine-studies.org/journals.aspx?id=6804&jid=1&href=fulltext/. 
References