[**Supporting Palestine**](https://www.dawn.com/news/1625527/supporting-palestine)

[Usama Khilji](https://www.dawn.com/authors/7248/usama-khilji)Published May 25, 2021 - Updated a day ago

The writer is director of Bolo Bhi, an advocacy forum for digital rights.

THE violent dispossession of Palestinians’ homes in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, the continuous harassment of Palestinians and the apartheid imposed on them in occupied Palestine, and the indiscriminate killing of Palestinians in Gaza by Israel’s military for 11 days has elicited a rightful global outcry in the past weeks, which is much louder this time thanks to the convening power of the internet.

Practical steps must complement Pakistan’s solidarity protests and diplomatic efforts at the UN and through the OIC to isolate the apartheid state of Israel.

The centring of the narrative around crimes against Palestinians was possible due to independent Palestinian activists — not just the elite or foreign correspondents — constantly updating people across the world on the situation through social media, and giving direction as to the kind of solidarity and support they needed. This is despite biased content moderation efforts by companies like Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and Google. The critical mass created by important voices like Mohammed El Kurd, Marwa Fatafta, Omar Ghareib, Yara Hawari amongst many others — and amplified by people across the world — forced several mainstream international media outlets to take Palestinian activists on air, contributing to an unprecedented shift in the global narrative about Palestine.

Practical steps must accompany solidarity protests.

This momentum must continue. People must pressure their governments to reassess their ties with Israel based on the gross violations of human rights the state has been committing against Palestinian people in flagrant violation of 225 UN Security Council resolutions about Palestine. Freedom-loving people across the world have spoken, with rallies attended by millions.

As a potent solution, the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divest, Sanctions (BDS) movement advocates a financial boycott of Israel to pressure it into ending violations of international human rights law in its violent treatment of Palestinians. This includes pushing governments to boycott military relations and deals with Israel, and consumer boycott of products made by Israeli and other international companies that are complicit in profiting from Israeli settlements on stolen Palestinian land.

The BDS website lists several companies, among them a technology company that developed the biometric ID system that Israel uses to enforce apartheid policies of restricting movement of Palestinians; a construction firm that has produced customised bulldozers for Israel to demolish Palestinian homes and infrastructure despite public calls for ending sales to Israel; a sports brand that has sponsored Israeli football, including teams in illegal settlements; and a firm that produces food products in factories on stolen Palestinian lands.

Several governments, companies, groups and individuals have taken BDS action in solidarity with Palestinians. Norway’s sovereign wealth fund — the largest in the world — has said it will divest from two firms linked to Israel’s illegal settlements in occupied Palestinian territories in the West Bank. Maldives, one of the smallest countries, announced suspension of ties with Israel amidst calls to bar Israeli tourists from visiting the island nation.

In the UK, activists shut down a factory of a subsidiary of Israeli arms manufacturer Elbit which produces drones for use by the Israeli army. In Italy, dockworkers as part of a union refused to load ships with weapons when they learnt they were being exported to Israel. And in South Africa, dockworkers refused to unload a ship that had arrived from Israel, with a worker’s union vowing to make South Africa an ‘apartheid-free zone’ in line with requests by the BDS movement. The boycott of South Africa ultimately forced an end of the apartheid regime that had existed for 35 years, and similar calls are being made against Israel for its apartheid policies to end.

Americans must force their government to cut the annual $3.8 billion aid to Israel which has enabled the killing of more than 60 Palestinian children; bombing of hospitals, the health ministry office, and the only Covid-19 testing lab in Gaza. The US shifting its embassy to Jerusalem has emboldened Israeli efforts to violently evict Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem as seen in Sheikh Jarrah; and the continuation of parallel military courts for Palestinians as opposed to civil courts reserved for Jewish citizens of Israel, a typical apartheid policy.

As Pakistan calls for Palestinians’ ‘right to self-determination and establishment of independent state with pre-1967 borders and Jerusalem as capital’, the government must also work with its private sector to implement an economic boycott of companies that Palestinian activists have listed as being complicit in the oppression of Palestinians by the Israeli settler-colonial apartheid state.

*The writer is director of Bolo Bhi, an advocacy forum for digital rights.*

[**usama@bolobhi.org**](http://mailto:usama@bolobhi.org)

**Twitter:** [**@UsamaKhilji**](https://twitter.com/UsamaKhilji)

*Published in Dawn, May 25th, 2021*