



Nazareth, 22 May 2019

In the words of **Ms. Nabila Espanioly**,
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Gideon levy – the Israeli well known journalist wrote on the 21 of May in Haaretz¹ newspaper the following: "Germany has just criminalized justice. A blend of warranted guilt feelings, orchestrated and taken to sickening extremes by cynical and manipulative Israeli extortion, caused the federal parliament on Friday to pass one of the most outrageous and bizarre resolutions since the end of World War II. The Bundestag has defined the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement against Israel as anti-Semitic" And he conclude by saying "In passing this resolution, the Bundestag did not do right by Israel, by justice or by international law. Only the Israeli occupation profited from it. The Bundestag does not have to support BDS, it's permissible to object to the boycott movement, but to criminalize it as anti-Semitic, especially in Germany? The "other Germany" betrayed its duty to its own conscience-driven civil society, to the Palestinians and also to Israel."

In my opinion as a Palestinian citizen of Israel and as a Peace and feminist activist, this decision boycotts the aspiration of many Jews and Palestinians that are committed to the struggle against occupation through a peaceful and democratic means. It kills the dream of those that are struggling against the Israel's ongoing occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Golan Heights; against the discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel; and against the violation of the rights of many Jewish and Palestinian citizens that are human rights defender, that are facing the gradually shrinking of space for their activism and as levy stated it "criminalize" their actions.

As a peace activist for more than 4 decades struggling to achieve peace in Israel and Palestine, we utilized all democratic means available to us including petitions, demonstrations, national and international Marches, campaigns, sit Ins, conferences, coalition building and peace movements activate on the national and international level (women in Black conferences, 1990 time for peace, engendering the peace process etc just to name a few). Back then we learned that boycotts, divestment campaigns and sanctions are tactics that have been used as non violent forms by activists and minority groups to advance numerous social movements in history. (History is full of effective boycott campaigns and they include solidarity campaign with south Africa, with Nicaragua, Montgomery bus boycott, The anti Apartheid movement, the Struggle for Farm Workers Rights, and efforts to End the Slave Trade in 18th century England and so forth). We learned that they succeeded in some areas and failed in others but they never were announced as illegal tactics.

Twenty years ago, and after failing to influence the policies in Israel, we came to the realization that in order to achieve peace we need international intervention. The intervention needs to be in the form of solidarity with the peace movements in Israel Palestine and in the form of diplomacy efforts with the Israeli government to give peace a chance and to end the occupation. We utilized these

¹ <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-germany-shame-on-you-and-your-anti-bds-resolution-1.7254386?fbclid=IwAR0yX3dq7oNdVqu7vckxJAq6VOxDY1-JnHrVL0YVSMbkG1LVRZ6Y96zIPjw>



interventions as well as approached other peace and women organizations in Israel, Palestine and internationally to join our efforts.

Our efforts created the change in the discourse in Israel at that time but it did not bring peace and justice. To my sorrow in the last decade we are witnessing a decline in the number of people, in Israel and Palestine, and around the world that are involved in peace activities as many of them have lost hope. Many are feeling desperate and ceased their activism. Due to such tendency in the international arena to adapt the hierarchy of suffering and the hierarchy of struggle, which legitimizes and supports one struggle and delegitimizes other struggles, based on interest, guilt and visibility of the issue. This decision of the German Bundestag reflects this tendency.

Of course the German Bundestag as levy stated "*does not have to support BDS, it's permissible to object to the boycott movement, but to criminalize it as anti-Semitic*" is far beyond my understanding. As Palestinian citizens of Israel, labeled as Semitic, never thought of a tactic as Semitic or anti Semitic!!!

As a peace activist in Israel I appeal to the international community especially from Germany to ensure their commitment to achieve peace in the Middle East. Especially as we have witnessed over the years a deterioration through the continuation of the occupation and human rights violation against Palestinian in the West Bank and Gaza and against Palestinian citizens of Israel and against human rights defenders in Israel.

I, myself, was a student in Germany when the peace and human rights movement supported the boycott on South Africa Apartheid regime. I learned back then that international solidarity can impact and can contribute to peace. And so, even if your opinion is that we could not compare between the two situations, we can learn from the tactics and their use. In order not to adapt double standards, we should not decide for the people who are struggling peacefully to end the occupation and any other injustice in the world. You should not encourage some people who are using one tactic to struggle against the occupation and criminalize others that use the same tactic.

I learned from fellow Germans that in order to build a peaceful future you need to take responsibility of the past. Responsibility and not guilt, as guilt paralyzes whereas responsibility motivates. Responsibility generates action and all democratic peaceful means are legal, even if they were announced (declared) as illegal. We need to keep the hope alive and we can only do so by struggling for freedom of speech (even if this speech is against my opinion and ideas), freedom of organizing and above all, believe in the democratic struggle using all available strategies and tactics known.

It is because I took Responsibility that I could struggle together with my Jewish Partners for peace and Justice. Responsibility for us means respecting each other's differences and aspirations. It means creating a safe place to talk about these differences, to talk about the narrative and identity. To talk about colonization, occupation and privileges and to stand together against violence and occupation for peace and justice.