

# Fact Sheet on Omar Shakir's BDS Campaigns

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In October 2016, [Human Rights Watch](#) (HRW) hired Omar Shakir to serve as its "Israel and Palestine Country Director." Shakir has been a consistent supporter of a one-state framework and advocate for BDS (boycotts, divestment, sanctions) campaigns, fitting the longstanding HRW practice of hiring anti-Israel activists for in positions relating to Israel. In April 2017, Shakir received a one-year Israeli work visa as a "human rights expert."

In May 2018, due to Shakir's BDS ties, the Israeli Ministry of Interior chose not to renew his visa, and HRW and Shakir challenged this decision in Israeli courts. In April 2019, he lost his case in the Jerusalem District Court and immediately appealed to the Israeli Supreme Court. The hearing took place on September 24, 2019. While Shakir regularly assails Israel for its "lack of democracy," in fact, few, if any, countries would have provided such extensive due process rights in a similar case. For instance, Shakir was allowed to challenge governmental decisions and file multiple briefs with various courts and government agencies, received lengthy opportunity to present oral arguments, and at least two Israeli courts allowed him to remain in the country during his appeal process despite the absence of any legal obligation to do so.

Omar Shakir's background and history of anti-Israel activity, and his repeated use of false claims and hyperbolic propaganda, highlights HRW's ideological hostility to Israel and retreat from the universal principles of human rights.

## **BDS Advocacy before Joining HRW**

- As a student at Stanford University (2010-2013), Shakir gave presentations with titles such as "[Renewing the Call for Divestment: A Campaign to Divest from Companies that Profit from Human Rights Violations in Israel/Palestine](#)." He also participated in the "Divestment Launch" at Stanford at an event titled "[Students Confronting Apartheid in Israel](#)."
- After Stanford and before joining HRW, Shakir was a legal fellow at the Center for

Constitutional Rights (CCR) (2014-2016), an organization that provides [legal assistance](#) and [training](#) to BDS activists and has [filed “war crimes” lawsuits](#) (“lawfare”) against former Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon and former Israel Security Agency (Shabak) Director Avi Dichter. The courts dismissed all of these cases at the preliminary stages for lack of merit.

- At CCR, Shakir [promoted BDS tactics](#) while speaking at public events and [represented](#) Steven Salaita in his lawsuit against the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign when he [was fired](#) for posting a series of Twitter messages, including “[Zionists: transforming ‘antisemitism’ from something horrible into something honorable since 1948.](#)”.
- Shakir [signed a 2015 letter](#) pledging to “honor[] the BDS call...[and] engage with Palestinians in our communities and support delegations to Palestine that are meant to highlight the reality on the ground of occupation, apartheid, and ethnic cleansing.”

## **BDS Activity as an HRW employee**

- Since joining HRW in 2016, Shakir has spearheaded numerous campaigns, including calling for BDS against companies with business activity over the 1949 Armistice line, pressing FIFA to sanction the Israel Football Association, promoting the UN BDS database (blacklist), and demonizing Israeli responses to violence along the Gaza border.
- In March 2017, (shortly after he received his Israeli work visa) Shakir traveled to Bahrain to “press FIFA” to sanction the Israel Football Association. (He was refused entry.)
- In September 2017 and May 2018, HRW published reports targeting Israeli banks and calling on “institutional investors” to divest from Israeli banks.
- Shakir led a [two-year long](#) coordinated and well-financed BDS campaign targeting Airbnb (and Booking.com), including the November 2018 publication “[Bed and Breakfast on Stolen Land: Tourist Rental Listings in West Bank Settlements.](#)” The report [contains](#) numerous false claims regarding the legal and human rights responsibility of Airbnb in allowing Israelis from the West Bank to list their properties. Airbnb initially acquiesced to the pressure and announced it would remove Jewish listings in the West Bank, but reversed its decision in April 2019 after settling numerous lawsuits for discrimination filed against the company.
- Shakir has advocated for the UN BDS database, a blacklist of businesses that operate across the 1949 Armistice line. The campaign uniquely targets Israel, is aimed at economically damaging companies that are owned by Jews or do business

with Israel, and is ultimately meant to harm the Jewish State. In July 2018, Shakir [tweeted](#), “Today at Human Rights Council, [@hrw](#) called for...supporting UN database of settlement businesses.”

- Since March 30, 2018, Hamas and other Palestinian terror groups have organized violent confrontations along Gaza’s border with Israel under the label of the “March of Return.” Shakir accused Israel of “[entrenched discrimination](#),” “[cag\[ing\]](#)” [Palestinians](#), and of “[whitewash\[ing\]](#)” [investigations](#). He [ignored the violent nature of the protests](#), which have consisted of an organized armed attack on the Israeli border and IDF positions, attempts to destroy and breach the border fence, and sustained arson, rocket, and mortar attacks on Israeli civilian communities.
  - In June 2018, he called for BDS against Israel, stating that it was “[Time for targeted sanctions against those implicated in serious abuses](#)” (emphasis added).

**An analysis of Shakir’s twitter activity in June 2018-February 2019 demonstrates his deep bias. In this time period, he [tweeted 970 times](#) (including retweets) on issues relating to the Arab-Israeli conflict. More than one-third used the language of demonization against Israel, and another third promoted BDS.**

18 of Shakir’s tweets condemned alleged Israeli attacks on Palestinians. In contrast, Shakir did not add his own voice in condemnation of terrorist attacks against Israelis, such as the murder of Ari Fuld in September 2018, the murder of two Israelis in the Barkan Industrial Park by a Palestinian terrorist in October 2018, the shooting of a pregnant woman outside Ofra in December 2018 resulting in the death of her baby, or the February 2019 brutal murder of a 19-year-old in Ein Yael forest in Jerusalem.

Source: <https://www.ngo-monitor.org/fact-sheet-on-omar-shakirs-bds-campaigns/>