

BDS Umbrella Group Linked to Palestinian Terrorist Organizations

Connections between an American charity and Hamas, PFLP, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad

By Armin Rosen and Liel Leibovitz | June 1, 2018 8:00 AM

Over the past decade, as the prospects of peace between Israelis and Palestinians became ever slimmer, there has been a growing attention to—and, in some quarters, acceptance of—the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement targeting Israel, or BDS. Those drawn to the cause have likely come across the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights, a Virginia-based nonprofit organization that serves as the American umbrella group of the BDS movement and is arguably the most prominent promoter of BDS in the United States. The US Campaign, which is officially called Education for Just Peace in the Middle East, coordinates the efforts of 329 different pro-BDS organizations “working to advocate for Palestinian rights and a shift in US policy ... bound by commonly shared principles on Palestine solidarity as well as our anti-racism principles,” according to the group’s [website](#).

But as *Tablet* confirmed, the group also helps facilitate tax-exempt donations to a Palestinian coalition that includes Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and other groups the U.S. State Department designates as terror organizations.

The US Campaign, *Tablet* has learned, is the fiscal sponsor of a group called the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC), the main West Bank and Gaza-based cohort advocating for sanctions against Israel. The BNC was created in 2007 in Ramallah with the intention of serving as the Palestinian arm of the international BDS campaign. According to the BNC’s website, one of the group’s members is the Council of National and Islamic Forces in Palestine, commonly known as PNIF. Among PNIF’s members are five different groups designated by the US as terrorist organizations, including Hamas, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Popular Front – General Command (PFLP-GC), the Palestine Liberation Front, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). Since its founding, the BNC has frequently and openly collaborated with known leaders of these terror organizations: In 2015, for example, the BNC held a press conference to pressure the Palestinian government not to import gas from Israel, featuring a [speech](#) by Khalida Jarrar, then a member of the Palestinian parliament for the PFLP and still an active official in the terror group. A [video](#) of the BNC-hosted press conference features Jarrar seated alongside BNC secretariat member Omar Barghouti.

Founded in 1967, the PFLP is responsible for numerous bloody attacks, including the 1976 hijacking of an Air France plane to Uganda and the 1980 assault on Kibbutz Misgav Am in northern Israel, during which PFLP terrorists took over the Kibbutz’s nursery and murdered 2 1/2-year-old Eyal Gluska. More recently, the PFLP [took responsibility](#) for the 2014 massacre of four Jews praying in a Jerusalem synagogue, and has emerged as a major [supporter](#) of Bashar

al-Assad's brutal regime in Syria. Last month, the group's combatants were filmed entering the Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus, where they supported Assad's murder of scores of Palestinians. The PFLP is also perennially at odds with Mahmoud Abbas' Palestinian Authority, making it difficult to argue that they represent a significant portion of Palestinians.

In November of 2017, the BNC's website, BDSMovement.net, began allowing American supporters to make tax-deductible donations to the group. Rather than form an American based "friends of" organization, which is what American supporters of foreign groups often do in order to make tax-exempt donations to those organizations, the BNC and its fiscal sponsor in the United States engineered an unusual solution.

Make a donation to the group, as *Tablet's* reporters did earlier this month, and you'll receive the following automated email: "This is a receipt for your kind donation to the Palestinian BDS National Committee, the broadest coalition in Palestinian civil society that leads the global BDS movement for Palestinian rights. For your records, the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC) is fiscally sponsored by Education for Just Peace in the Middle East, which is registered as a 501(c)3 charitable organization." Education for Just Peace in the Middle East, again, is the legal name for the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights. "Our fiscal sponsor's EIN is 42-1636592," ends the email from the BNC, listing the same IRS identification number as the US Campaign.

This arrangement is made possible due to what is known as fiscal sponsorship, which allows for an organization to temporarily extend their privileges as a nonprofit to a group that is in the process of getting tax-exempt status from the IRS. As the procedure for receiving 501(c)3 status can be intricate and time-consuming, an established non-profit can temporarily collect donations on another organization's behalf until the newer group is awarded nonprofit status of its own. Fiscal sponsorship is also used to cover short-term projects or campaigns spun off from a larger tax-exempt charity.

In this case, the US Campaign is using fiscal sponsorship, its own nonprofit status, and its EIN to enable tax-exempt fundraising for a foreign political entity. U.S.-based charities have broad discretion to donate to foreign organizations that advance the American group's mission. But there are rules: The U.S. group is responsible for ensuring that the money doesn't go to terrorist organizations, and the group that receives the money can't spend a substantial amount of its resources on attempting to influence legislation in the United States or abroad. There are also standards that are supposed to govern all tax-deductible organizations: Broadly speaking, in order for a donation to be tax-deductible, it has to be made to a group that is based in the United States and that is making the bulk of its spending decisions within the U.S. as well—which explains why Americans who want to support foreign organizations often set up U.S.-based "friends of" charities whose boards mostly consist of U.S. residents who are based in the United States itself.

The BNC is located far from U.S. soil, and it is unclear that the US Campaign has much say on how the money collected on behalf of its Palestinian sponsoree will be spent. There is no indication that any of the money raised through the fiscal sponsorship is going to terror groups, nor is there any clear way of ascertaining how the money collected is spent. All that is clear is that there's a financial relationship between these two separate groups.

Efforts by Palestinian groups with links to terrorist organizations to influence American policy, however, are not confined to attempts to boycott Israel. Last year, Representative Betty McCollum (D-MN) introduced H.R. 4391, a resolution intended to curb American financing of Israel's alleged violations of the rights of Palestinian minors. The bill currently has 19 co-sponsors, all Democrats. Introducing the bill in November of 2017, McCollum tweeted a photo of herself with several pro-Palestinian activists, and thanked a number of organizations for endorsing the bill, including the US Campaign and a group called Defense for Children International—Palestine (DCIP).

The DCIP is also cited in the bill itself, and Rep. McCollum's government page directs readers to the DCIP's website. The group held several briefings on Capitol Hill, including one, in June of 2015, that the group claims "drew over 100 attendees, including staff from at least 30 different congressional offices."

As publicly available resources in Arabic show, the DCIP has had several previous board members and staffers who have been involved with the PFLP. They include DCIP board member Hassan Abed Aljawad, a PFLP leader representing the terrorist organization at public events as recently as 2016; DCIP board member Mahmoud Jiddah, a former PFLP member who had been jailed for 17 years for carrying out grenade attacks against Israeli civilians in Jerusalem in 1968; DCIP board secretary and attorney Fatima Daana, who is the widow of Raed Nazzal, former commander of the PFLP's armed wing in Qalqilya; DCIP former board member Shawan Jabarin, who was convicted of recruiting members to the PFLP in 1985 and identified in 1994 by Israel to the U.N. Commission of Human Rights as being a senior member of the PFLP; DCIP former board member Hashem Abu Maria, identified by the PFLP as one of its "deputy comrades" and a "fighting commander" in an obituary published on the PFLP website in Arabic and killed during a violent clash with IDF forces (the DCIP's 2014 report is dedicated to Abu Maria); DCIP former board member Nassar Ibrahim, the former editor in chief of the PFLP weekly publication, El Hadaq; and DCIP former board member Dr. Majed Nassar, the deputy director of the Union of Health Work Committees, which was identified by USAID as a PFLP affiliate in 1993.

Emails and calls to the US Campaign; a liaison between the US Campaign and the BNC; the DCIP; and Rep. McCollum went unanswered.

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