APARTHEID FREE ZONE

Organizing Guide

November 2024

BDS

Table of contents

1

Introduction

What is an Apartheid Free Zone? 2
What does it imply? 3
Alliances for freedom, justice and equality 4

2

Apartheid Free Zone: a journey to start

The Apartheid Free Zone journey 5
Step 1: Declare your commitment 6
Step 2: Be an Apartheid Free Zone 7
Step 3: Continue the journey 9

3

Types of Apartheid Free Zones

Social, academic, cultural and sports 11
Cafés and local businesses 12
Trade unions 13
City councils and local governments 14

4

Intersectionality in AFZ building

Build principled alliances 17
Adjust to your local context 18

1. Introduction

What is an Apartheid Free Zone?

Over the last two decades, people of conscience and grassroots organizations have built BDS campaigns to end complicity with apartheid Israel. As Israel's genocide against Palestinians rages on, these struggles have shown the importance of creating sustainable spaces to nurture the movement and build concrete solidarity for the Palestinian people.

The Apartheid Free Zone (AFZ) campaign, as part of the BDS movement, seeks to foster the creation of progressive, intersectional spaces across the world, which are free of Israel's genocide, apartheid and settler colonialism, and which bring together multiple struggles for justice and equality.

As people of conscience, we want to ensure that the spaces in which we participate do not contribute to the maintenance of a genocidal, apartheid regime, benefit from grave human rights violations, or become influenced or shaped by any of the former. Israel's genocidal war against the 2.3 million Palestinians in the occupied and besieged Gaza Strip has increased the importance of expanding AFZs: **there is no business as usual under apartheid and genocide.**

What does it imply?

An organization, union or local business that wants to become an Apartheid Free Zone commits to refrain from providing any kind of support to Israel's regime of oppression. This objective can be achieved through a number of measures, depending on your local socio-political context, alliances and the type of space.

A space can, for instance, be an AFZ

- **By not doing business with companies that are complicit in Israel's gross human rights violations** (including prolonged occupation, colonial settlements, ethnic cleansing, apartheid and genocide), such as Intel, Carrefour, HP, Chevron, AXA, etc. which are also BDS targets.
- **By complying with the Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)** and the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) guidelines.
- Where applicable, **by divesting from and refraining from investing in complicit companies** listed by the UNHRC, Who Profits, DIMSE, AFSC Investigate, and DBIO.

More details are in the following section.

Building alliances for freedom, justice and equality

Being an Apartheid Free Zone (AFZ) implies **a principled commitment to the equal rights of every human being.** It promotes the creation of spaces of proactive international solidarity that are free of racism, discrimination, domination and oppression. Initiatives to create AFZs can therefore build joint initiatives or create broad alliances with other social, racial, gender and climate justice movements promoting the same overall principles.

Across the world, community activists are already working with hundreds of local councils, shops, restaurants, community centers, businesses, trade unions and other civil society organizations that have declared themselves Apartheid Free Zones, from Argentina to New Zealand, from Norway to Kenya, and Italy to Japan.

In some countries, student unions have declared themselves as AFZs.

In Indonesia, a growing number of civil society organisations are Apartheid and Genocide Free Zones, while in the United States, churches and other organizations are declaring themselves to be Apartheid Free Communities.

Let's get started!

2. Apartheid Free Zone: a journey to start

Becoming an Apartheid Free Zone is a journey.

We see the AFZ campaign as a journey to be embarked on by grassroots communities, businesses, unions and organizations wishing to end complicity in apartheid and to build spaces that aspire to be ultimately free of all forms of oppression.

Below are the concrete steps listed by the Palestinian BDS National Committee leading the BDS movement globally. These steps apply for every space to become an AFZ starting with identifying any complicity with Israel's settler colonial, apartheid and genocide regime:

1. Declare your commitment to become an AFZ: commit to cutting all ties with apartheid Israel and all its complicit institutions, as well as with corporations that are implicated in its gross human rights violations.
2. Become an AFZ: Cut all ties with BDS priority targets and divest, where applicable, from companies listed by authoritative UN and civil society research groups.
3. Continue your journey in standing intersectionally with other justice struggles, and participate actively in BDS campaigns, to ultimately have your space free as much as feasible of all forms of oppression.

Step 1: Declare your commitment to become an AFZ

Before starting the journey to become an AFZ, the BDS movement asks every space to:

a. Respect the basic principles of anti-racism and anti-discrimination laid out in our reference statement, "Racism and Racial Discrimination are the Antithesis of Freedom, Justice & Equality".

b. Terminate/commit to not renew relationships with Israeli institutions, which are virtually all complicit in the system of oppression against the Indigenous Palestinian people, and with international corporations that are implicated in this system of oppression.

c. Respect the PACBI guidelines or commit to not participate in or promote any activity/project/event that pinkwashes, sportswashes, greenwashes or otherwise legitimizes or whitewashes Israeli apartheid.

d. Respect the Palestinian anti-normalization guidelines.

Join other cultural and social spaces, businesses and institutions in publicly announcing your commitment to become an AFZ. You can find a suggested declaration in our AFZ toolkit here.

Step 2: Be an Apartheid Free Zone

The BDS movement uses the historically successful method of targeted boycotts. We focus on a relatively smaller number of carefully selected companies and products for maximum impact.

Your journey should start with a comprehensive assessment of your links with complicit Israeli and international companies and institutions targeted by the BDS movement. **You can find the list of BDS priority targets here.***

Tips:

- We advise you to start a calendar to prepare for this process; make an assessment of your supply chain, your financial links, as well as your procurement process; set up your tasks and deadlines, and if the challenge sounds too big, ask for the support of BDS groups and partners in your country if necessary. Gradual steps towards the ultimate AFZ goal are sometimes unavoidable.
- These targets might change with time, either because we identify new, higher priority targets or we remove some because they have ended their complicity following BDS movement pressure. As in any journey, it's important to keep yourself up to date.
- Do you already own durable goods from a company complicit in Israeli apartheid? Use them to publicize your support for Palestinian rights by covering the logo with a campaign sticker until the product life span ends and you substitute them with a less complicit, more ethical alternative.

Don't forget that solidarity is a verb! Get involved in BDS campaigns active in your country, in mobilizing your clients, suppliers, members, etc. The best way is to reach out to a BDS group or partner in your country. If none exists, reach out to the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC), the largest Palestinian coalition that is leading the global BDS movement (info@BDSmovement.net).

***** *Boycotting organic targets needs to be contextualized and taken on according to the reasonable capacity of the Apartheid Free Zone.*

Have you done all the above? You're an AFZ!

You can officially declare yourselves an AFZ. See the model declaration in our toolkit and register your AFZ on the BDS movement's website to appear on our interactive map.

Step 3: Continue the journey, ultimately aspiring to be free of all forms of oppression

Continue independently your journey in standing intersectionally with other justice struggles and participate actively in BDS campaigns, to ultimately have your space aspiring to be free of all forms of oppression and help us build intersectional support for Palestinian rights, encouraging other movements to join.

You can continue your AFZ journey by ensuring you have no ties with any other corporations and institutions that are complicit with Israel's regime of settler-colonialism, military occupation, apartheid and genocide.

While there is no comprehensive database of all the companies involved in Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights, the following are important and reliable resources:

- the targeted BDS campaigns;
- the UN database;
- the DBIO list of financial institutions and companies involved in Israel's illegal settlements enterprise;
- the AFSC investment screen and divestment list;
- the Who Profits database.

Here are some practical ways to make your AFZ intersectional:

AFZ is an intersectional campaign that is built on principled alliances with other grassroots struggles for racial and gender justice, refugee and migrant rights, climate justice, Indigenous land and resource rights, anti-militarism and others. As a third step of the journey, you can broaden the community and fight against Israeli apartheid as well as all other forms of oppression at home and in every corner of the world, as much as feasible, of course!

In this respect, here are some example questions for your consideration:

- **Is your place part of any fair trade network?** Does it adopt any human/labor rights principles or an anti-discrimination policy?
- Do you have a transparent policy or concrete practice for **gender equity and no tolerance for gender and sexual violence?**
- **Are you in touch with other anti-racist groups** working on issues such as indigenous rights, refugee-migrants' rights, decolonization, international solidarity with other oppressed peoples, or environmental and climate justice?

The journey continues in building cooperation and partnerships for the common struggle against all forms of racism, racial discrimination and oppression.

3. Types of Apartheid Free Zones

Social AFZs:

Are you a social movement or collective? A community of neighbors? A pottery or dance academy? A community center? ... Enhancing mutual support is a fundamental aspect of the AFZ and a great way for broadening the scope of BDS campaigns and other Palestine solidarity activism.

Academic, Cultural, and Sports AFZs:

Universities, institutes, music festivals, theaters, film festivals, sports clubs and fan associations can all be spaces free of Israeli apartheid, racism, and racial discrimination. By declaring their willingness to start the AFZ journey, they can commit to adhering to the PACBI guidelines and decide to not participate in or promote any activity/project/event that pinkwashes, sportswashes, greenwashes or otherwise legitimizes or whitewashes Israeli apartheid. These spaces can also promote Palestinian heritage and culture. If these spaces also have investments in companies, ask them to adopt an ethical investment policy, excluding companies involved in gross human rights violations (including prolonged military occupation, ethnic cleansing, apartheid, genocide, etc.).

Cafés and local businesses as AFZs:

Cafés, bookstores and other local businesses can become AFZs by committing to not procure or sell products from the illegal Israeli settlements or from any Israeli or international company that profits from violations of Palestinian human rights (check the suggestions in the toolkit). Check if your neighborhood café or corner store is serving or selling, for instance, Israeli dates, herbs, wine or vegetables and explain to the owner and customers why this is unacceptable. Use this as an opportunity for awareness raising. Convince the owners to start the AFZ journey and to let you distribute some brochures or materials in the store. Note that you can also engage with shops that do not (yet) offer any Israeli produce as a preemptive step. These may be easily convinced to transform this into a conscious policy and help create a critical mass of AFZs at the initial stages of your campaign.

Trade Unions as AFZs:

Trade unions, student unions, women's unions or professional unions organize and mobilize for rights and interests of respective constituencies and may be more easily convinced to commit to values of justice and equality as an organic part of their struggle. By turning your union into an AFZ, you can make the Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice and equality an integral part of your union's efforts. This would also pave the way for strong BDS campaigns to end the complicity of your employer company, university or institution with apartheid Israel. It could also lead, where applicable, to convince your union to divest from complicit companies and exclude them from its own procurement contracts for products and services. Just as the struggles against racism, sexism, climate injustice, among others, have become integral to many union struggles, it is time to make Palestinian liberation integral to your union's values.

Apartheid free policy for city councils and local governments:

Local government institutions (such as municipalities, regional councils, etc.) can support the struggle of the Palestinian people for freedom, justice and equality by joining the AFZ campaign especially in the Global South where official support for Palestinian liberation is much more prevalent.

In Europe, the US and other parts of the world that are complicit inIsrael's genocide in Gaza, apartheid free policy activism can be geared towards adopting general ethical procurement policies which prevent contracts or cooperation with or investment in entities that are complicit in gross human rights violations anywhere, including apartheid Israel.

The Brazilian city of Belém is an Apartheid Free Zone.

Apartheid free policy for city councils and local governments:

AFZ campaigns involving local governments approach local councils and regional governments as entities of the state. They enhance the role of local government in the performance of duties of the state under national and international law. In January 2024, the International Court of Justice recognised Israel's actions in Gaza as plausible genocide. Ending complicity in genocide and in the crime against humanity of apartheid is an obligation for all state actors under international law, and this includes local governments.

Local government institutions that adopt the AFZ framework or adopt ethical procurement policy thus simply do what is legally required from them: they commit to respect, protect and promote human rights and international law. They also adopt practical measures which are required to meet these commitments. Examples of such measures are public procurement policies that require the exclusion of any company involved in grave human rights violations from bids for public contracts; withdrawing investments from such complicit companies; and policies that foreclose cooperation or partnerships with complicit public and private institutions in the fields of culture and sports.

Apartheid free policy for city councils and local governments:

Get in touch with us for model motions for Apartheid-Free City Councils/Municipalities and for ethical procurement policies. The passing of the motion is just the starting point of a new phase in which local BDS groups need to be active. Monitoring the implementation of the decisions adopted is central for the success of this campaign. For doing so, we need to mobilize public support for the local council, empower it, and work hand in hand with it.

The AFZ campaign encourages creative ways of building apartheid-free spaces, which can go beyond the types suggested above. The essential aim is to commit to the journey of becoming an AFZ and ultimately end complicity with and create spaces free of apartheid and any forms of oppression.

4. Intersectionality in AFZ building

Build principled alliances through your AFZ journey.

Before moving on to develop AFZ campaigns in the different spaces, it is good to take into account that the campaign has a principled intersectional approach. Building alliances with other social movements is strongly encouraged for working on this campaign.

- **Ensure alliance building is as broad as possible and based on principled anti-racism and anti-discrimination.** The BDS movement rejects all forms of racism. Therefore, we only work with partners who oppose Israeli apartheid as well as any other type of racism or racial discrimination.
- **Consider connecting AFZ campaigns with other initiatives for social justice and accountability.** Many other movements campaigning for human, environmental, racial, cultural and socio-economic rights are developing - or may want to develop together with you - initiatives to ensure that there are no institutional or other relations of complicity with rights violations. The commitment not to support Israeli apartheid and genocide can be part of a broader commitment to ethical policies.

Adjust to your local context.

Context-sensitivity is essential for designing successful campaigns. Local dynamics, alliances and political context will shape your AFZ campaign. You may want to initiate campaigning or join existing social justice initiatives within your community or city. This toolkit offers a general overview of how the campaign can be implemented. Still, each context is unique, and you will have to develop specific strategies and tactics in each case.

BDS
FREEDOM
JUSTICE
EQUALITY