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Consumer Boycott Activity - Feeling informed when responding to tricky questions

This is not about responding to hecklers, who are best ignored, but to people who appear to want to know more and might think it's wrong to boycott or takes "sides". When you consider the distorted/biased reporting by the main stream media, it's hardly surprising the main challenge we have is countering indifference of ignorance, as in not knowing.

Here are some typical questions or statements that we should feel confident to respond to. The replies are our thoughts, and provide a basis for replying or feeling confident on these issues.

1) It's so complex ; there'll never be a solution.

Response :

It can appear complex, and it's in Israel's interests to make it seem complex, but the right to exist, to live in your own country, to not live under military occupation, to not live under apartheid laws, is not complex.

OR

57 years of occupation, apartheid laws and practices, and having your life made unbearable. It's not complex when you're on the receiving end, but if you're the perpetrator, you want to make it seem complex.

Additional background information:

i) The International Court of Justice, the highest court in the world, has ruled that Israel's occupation of the West Bank, and the settlements established there since 1967, and the siege of Gaza, are illegal.

ii) Amnesty International, and other human rights organisations, including B'Tselem in Israel, have found that Israel's laws and practices against the Palestinians meet the definition of apartheid.

iii) If you were forced to live in a refugee camp in your own country, you might resent the 'incomers' who are stealing your land, demolishing or taking over your home, and setting up illegal settlements in your country.

iv) Peace will come when Israel stops ethnically cleansing Palestinians from their own country, stops violating Palestinian human rights, and starts to comply with international humanitarian law.

2) Why Israel / Palestine when there's so many other conflicts in the world?

Response:

Many countries in the world have an equally appalling human rights record like Israel, but Britain has a unique responsibility for having enabled the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, and for having created the conditions for the hostilities that exist today. Additionally, Britain is complicit in the war crimes taking place, as it supplies arms to Israel.



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Additional background information:

i) Britain, through the Balfour Declaration of 1917, was entirely responsible for the success of the Zionist movement establishing itself to the great detriment of the native inhabitants of Palestine. Britain needed the support of the USA in the first World War, and it can be argued that this came about because of Jewish/Zionist influence in the USA. Britain issued the Balfour Declaration as a means of winning its Great War. The Balfour Declaration promised a people a homeland in a territory Britain had no historic right to, and which it had already promised to others - Arabs, who were 93% of the population of Palestine - , at least by strong implication, to lure them into fighting for the Empire in the war.

ii) Palestine was under British control from 1919 to 1948, having previously been under Ottoman control. This responsibility was called the British Mandate. Jewish terrorist groups, the Irgun , the Stern Group, and the Haganah, began to carry out attacks on the British forces from the 1930's onwards. After WW2, Britain was not in a position to manage this, and handed ' the problem' over to the newly formed United Nations. They all too quickly produced a Partition Plan for a Jewish state and a Palestinian state that favoured the newly arrived Jewish immigrants, who were given 53% of historic Palestine , despite only owning 7% of the land, and making just over 30 % of the total population.

iii) Soon after creating the state of Israel, the Jewish immigrants seized over half of the land given for the Palestinian state, thus occupying 78% of the land.

iv) The 1948 Nakba refers to the violent expulsion and ethnic cleansing of 750,000 Palestinians (3/4 of the Palestinian population in 1948) and the destruction of 530 Palestinian villages. Israel's brutality did not start as a result of October 7th - Palestinian injustice has been going on for 77 years. Israel continues to displace Palestinians, to steal more and more Palestinian land, and to establish more illegal settlements.

v) Britain is an ally of Israel, and has a responsibility to respond to violations of international law and to place sanctions against a country committing war crimes. Instead Britain continues to arm Israel and

sanctions against a country committing war crimes. Instead Britain continues to arm Israel and is complicit in these war crimes.

vi) The list of Israeli violations of international law is long, and because the UK government is a signatory of the Fourth Geneva Conventions, it has third party responsibility for ensuring that international law is respected . Instead, our government remains silent thus we must continue to pressure our MPs.

3) You're anti-semitic

Response:

Being pro-Palestinian and pro-justice doesn't equate to being anti-semitic. This is a political issue, not a religious one, and many Jewish people, rightly proud of the values and principles of Judaism, are appalled at what the state of Israel and it's extreme right wing government are doing - crimes against humanity, plausible genocide, ethnic cleansing, illegal occupation, apartheid , etc - are regularly saying " Not in my name". Many British people are saying the same because of the unwavering support from the British government, and it's selling of arms to Israel right now.

OR

Irrational hatred of Jews for being Jews cannot be tolerated anywhere in the world. Criticism of, or opposition to, a political ideology such as Zionism, which is a racist and supremacist ideology, is a different matter. It is rational to oppose a racist ideology. Criticising a government or states not racism, and many Jewish people are angry at the Israeli government's attempts to conflate Judaism and Zionism. One is a religion, the other a supremacist political ideology.



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Additional background information

i) Israel's policy of settling its civilians on occupied Palestinian land and displacing the local population contravenes fundamental rules of international law (Article 49 of the 4th Geneva Convention). Over 700,000 Israelis now live in settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The West admonishes Israel for this, but takes no action.

ii) Israel has never been serious about a 2 state solution , but has "supported" it as a stalling tactic whilst it has continued to expand it's settlement programme, which has made a 2 state solution virtually impossible. The Oslo Accords were a fine example of that.

iii) Israel, as the occupying power, " ... has a duty to ensure the protection , security, and welfare of the people (Palestinians) living under occupation, and to guarantee that they can live as normal a life as possible, in accordance with their own laws, culture and traditions (International Committee of the Red Cross).

iv) Under international law, the 'aggressor in a conflict' must do everything possible to avoid destroying hospitals and other medical facilities, schools, universities , and infrastructural facilities like water and utilities. It must ensure adequate aid and food enters the area for civilians. Israel ignores all these responsibilities , because there's no consequences for their flouting of international law. The UK government is more than complicit. It is a partner in crime.

4) Israel has a right to defend itself:

- There's a range of responses you could make. Choose the responses you like:

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i) Mass starvation of children and their families by preventing aid going into Gaza, and cutting off water, energy and medical supplies is not defending yourself. It is the extermination of a people. It is genocide . Defending yourself does not include atrocities.

ii) It didn't start on October 7th. You have to look at the context. Gaza has been under a military siege since 2007, and was regarded as the world's largest open air prison, prior to its absolute destruction. The West Bank and East Jerusalem have been under military occupation since 1967.

iii) You can defend yourself against a foreign country that is attacking you. Under international law, the occupied country has the right to resist, which can include armed resistance. We respected the French Resistance in WW2, and currently respect the Ukrainian resistance, for resisting occupation by an aggressor. Palestine has been under military occupation or control since 1947, yet the UK supports the aggressor.

iv) Are you seriously condoning the starvation of civilians, including children, the targeting of doctors, other hospital staff, paramedics, journalists, 10 year old children by army snipers (according to British doctors), and civilians queueing up for aid. Is this proportional?? These are being investigated as war crimes.

Additional background information:

i) Israel is the 10th most powerful country in the world, with massive external support, especially from the USA. Palestine doesn't have an Army, Air Force or Navy.

ii) When you live under such a repressive regime, that constantly provokes and intimidates you, your anger will come to the surface. Israel wants this to happen so it can describe, with western media amplification, any resistance as an unprovoked attack. Israel then justifies it's brutal response by claiming it " has a right to defend itself". Hence the current horrific, disproportionate and devastating genocide in 2023/24/25, which is continuing to the disbelief and dismay of the majority of the world.



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iv) Palestinians have the legal right to resist foreign occupation. The occupied people are under no obligation of allegiance to the occupying people. In addition, Israel cannot invoke self-defence against such forms of resistance as grounds necessitating or justifying violations of international law.

5) Do you condemn Hamas? Hamas are to blame.

Response:

- Question always asked of Palestinians or Palestinian supporters, but Israelis or Israeli sympathisers are rarely, if ever, asked if they condemn:
 - Cutting off essential supplies of food, water, fuel and medical supplies.
 - The 58 year illegal, military occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem..
 - The targeting of doctors, paramedics, journalists, children, etc
 - Settler colonialism and the vicious behaviour of the illegal settlers
 - Apartheid laws and practices.
 - Ethnic cleansing and displacement of the indigenous people.
 - The brutal and barbaric actions of the IDF/IOF in enforcing a racist regime.
- We don't condone what happened on October 7th, but we can understand a people living under a brutal and dehumanising siege, eventually exploding. We have to understand the context, this was not a reaction from nowhere.
- Any murder of civilians is unacceptable. But this did not start on October 7th (2023). Israel's disproportionate response is another chapter in their ethnic cleansing of Palestine which began 77 years ago, when 750,000 Palestinians were forced to flee their homes and villages, and not allowed to return as per international law. Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem have lived under military occupation since 1967, with more and more of their land being seized for further settlement expansion. Palestinians in Israel live under apartheid laws and policies. The list of grievances is endless.

Additional background information.

- i) Israel's 18 year year blockade of Gaza by land, sea, and air, keeps Gaza's caged with snipers at their 'prison' fence, all builds resentment, frustration and anger. Gaza is regarded as the world's largest open prison.
- ii) Since the blockade and siege of Gaza began in 2007 there have been major military assaults on Gaza in 2008/09, 2012, 2014 and 2021. Over 4,000 civilians were killed, tens of thousands were seriously injured, and homes, schools, hospitals and other vital public infrastructure were destroyed.
- iii) In 2018, the largely peaceful demonstrations to demand the 'Right of Return' resulted in 100's of Palestinians murdered by Israeli snipers, and 1,000's seriously injured, with many requiring leg amputations as Israel instituted a 'shoot to maim' policy for the severe impact it would have on medical services in Gaza.

6) Boycotts don't work

Response:

Tell that to the South Africans where boycott helped bring down South African apartheid. It took over 40 years for apartheid in South Africa to be dismantled, but once enough people got on board, it was just a matter of time. It takes time to build this momentum.



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Additional background information:

i) The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement encourages the use of the historically successful method of targeted boycotts, inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement, the US Civil Rights movement, and the Indian and Irish anti-colonial struggles, among others worldwide.

ii) BDS asks us to target companies that play a clear and direct role in Israel's crimes against Palestinians. This is how the BDS movement has successfully forced companies like G4S, Veolia, Orange, Puma, and Pillsbury, among others, to end their complicity in Israel's grave human rights violations and crimes. This sends a compelling message to hundreds of other complicit companies that "your time will come, so get out before it's too late!"

7) They're as bad as each other. Why are you supporting Palestine?

Response: Palestinians are being collectively punished (regarded as a war crime) and are being treated as subhuman. I have friends who are Palestinian, and I can't stand by and do nothing. I'm sure you'd feel the same if people, including young children, you knew somewhere else in the world were being dehumanised/ethnically cleansed/ massacred.

Additional background information:

i) The situation in Israel and Palestine is often portrayed as a conflict between two equal sides, but Israel is the 10th most powerful country in the world, with massive external support, especially from the USA. Palestine doesn't have an Army, Air Force or Navy.

ii) It's not a conflict it's ethnic cleansing. Israel has been forcing people to flee their houses and villages since 1948, houses that Palestinian families have lived in for generations and generations. 750,000 Palestinians (2/3rds of the Palestinian population) were forced to flee their homes and villages in 1948 (77 years ago). 530 villages were raised to the ground. Palestinians refer to this as the Nakba or 'catastrophe'. A further 350,000 Palestinians were forced to flee their homes and villages in 1967 as Israel occupied the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The Nakba is a continual process.

iii) It's often portrayed as a religious conflict, but this is about one race of people, Zionist Jews, arriving into Palestine in the last hundred years or so, and trying to displace, ethnically cleanse, eradicate, eliminate the indigenous people the Palestinians. Fighting for your homeland is about as just a cause as you can get.

8) Why are you bothering about this? You should be concerned about what's happening in this country.

I'm also concerned, as no doubt you are, that too many decisions are taken to support the super rich, who are the beneficiaries of Israel's policies in the Middle East, which includes the oppression and attempted extermination of the Palestinian people.