

Briefing and FAQ on New Orleans City Council Resolution R-18-5 *New Orleans, BDS, and How This Impacts Jewish New Orleans*

**Jointly prepared and issued by the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans
and the Anti-Defamation League**

A few hours after the New Orleans City Council honored the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans on Thursday, January 11, for our history of philanthropic commitment to the greater New Orleans region, they passed a resolution (R-18-5) that formally asks City Hall to review all existing contracts for ethical considerations, particularly where human rights are concerned. In a vacuum, the language of resolution's support for human rights is beyond laudable, but the context surrounding its passage is concerning. Although the text of the resolution does not reference Israel or BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel), supporters of the resolution are promoting the notion that New Orleans is now the first major southern city to pass a resolution in support of boycotting, divesting from, and sanctioning Israel.

What is BDS?

Since the outbreak of the second Intifada in 2000 and the Durban Conference of 2001, organizers around the globe have called for the "boycott, divestment and sanctions" (BDS) of Israel. The BDS movement aims to emulate the 1980s campaigns against South African apartheid. Its supporters claim that Israeli policies towards Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and West Bank is analogous to South African apartheid, and that the same tactics used in South Africa should be employed to pressure, ostracize and marginalize Israel.

Campaigns have been launched demanding the "divestment" of university, municipal, church, union and other investment portfolios from companies that advocates claim "aid Israel's occupation", as well as the "boycott" of Israeli products, professionals, professional associations and academic institutions, and artistic performances (in Israel and abroad).

Many of the founding goals of the BDS movement, including denying the Jewish people the universal right of self-determination – along with many of the strategies employed in BDS campaigns are not merely critical, but also anti-Semitic. Many individuals involved in BDS campaigns are driven by opposition to Israel's very existence as a Jewish state.

Further, the BDS movement does not embrace a two-state solution, does not acknowledge any Palestinian accountability for their own actions in the region, and is targeted specifically against Israel, as opposed to targeting any other countries.

What was the wording of the resolution?

WHEREAS, the City of New Orleans (hereinafter the "City") was declared to be a Welcoming City on October 1, 2015, to create a more inclusive, receptive city environment for all local populations; and

WHEREAS, the City commits itself to protect, respect, and fulfill the full range of inherent human rights for all, as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and numerous other international human rights instruments; and

WHEREAS, the City enshrined these values in Ord. No. 19278 M.C.S.; 25700 M.C.S.; Code of Ord. Sec. 86-4. (Safeguard all individuals within the city from discrimination because of race, creed, national origin or ancestry, color, religion, gender or sex, sexual orientation, gender identification, marital status, age, physical condition or disability in connection with employment, housing, public accommodations, financial practices, and credit transactions; to protect their interest in personal dignity and freedom from humiliation; to make available to the city their full productive capacities in employment; to secure the city against domestic strife and unrest which would menace its democratic institutions; to preserve the public safety, health, and general welfare; and to further the interest, rights, and privileges within the city); and

WHEREAS, the City has pledged to meet its commitments to rewarding workplace diversity, promoting local industry, protecting the environment, and promoting equity through compliance with civil rights; and

WHEREAS, consistent with its responsibilities to its residents, the City of New Orleans, has social and ethical obligations to take steps to avoid contracting with or investing in corporations whose practices consistently violate human rights, civil rights or labor rights, or corporations whose practices egregiously contradict efforts to create a prosperous, educated, healthy and equitable society; NOW, THEREFORE

BE IT RESOLVED, That the City Council encourages the creation of a process to review direct investments and contracts for inclusion on, or removal from, the City's list of corporate securities and contractual partners, according to the values of the City as referenced in this Resolution.

http://cityofno.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=3&event_id=21477&meta_id=395917

How and why did this happen?

Following the White House's announcement of the planned movement of the American embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, the New Orleans Palestinian Solidarity Committee (NOPSC) held a December 12 protest at City Hall. Members of the City Council expressed interest in meeting with the group, which resulted in circulation of NOPSC's resolution to the Council at yesterday's January 11 meeting.

Generally, items of business are shared with the public on a published agenda. The resolution was listed at the very end of the published agenda as "under suspension." The council occasionally utilizes a rules procedure whereby if an item is not on the public agenda that an item can be taken up under a process called "suspension of

rules.” This is what occurred yesterday. Rules were suspended after a six-hour meeting so that the item could be taken up. It is an unfair and undemocratic process, because when the public is denied notice of an agenda item, only one side of the issue will be presented. The fact that there were organized speakers and supporters shows us that this was a concerted effort to push this through without debate. Federation supports the values expressed in the resolution, but is alarmed at the suspension of public discourse, which is stunningly un-democratic.

How do we know this is a pro-BDS resolution?

While the resolution does not mention Israel or the Middle East, NOPSC explicitly stated their goals during the 10-minute discussion of the resolution, specifically referencing Israel as the target of the resolution. They later celebrated the resolution as the first step towards New Orleans’ divestment of companies which do business in Israel.

How are ADL and Federation responding?

Since the passage of the resolution, Federation and ADL leaders immediately undertook an aggressive effort to combat a legal instrument which is harmful to the City of New Orleans and also the Jewish community. We have been in constant contact with members of the City Council, the Office of the Mayor, and other civic leaders. We are also coordinating with the Jewish Federations of North America and the national office of the Anti-Defamation League. We are working tirelessly to address and resolve this issue with our city leaders, including having statements of clarification issued and rescission of the resolution considered, and will keep you apprised.

What can members of the community do?

Education and advocacy!

It is important to understand what BDS is, so that you are able to interpret things you may hear in the news, or engage in conversations with people who do not understand the issue. We have provided links below to various materials and tools relating to BDS. These will help you educate yourselves and be able to engage others, including elected officials, in a meaningful discussion about the BDS agenda.

We encourage you to engaged your elected officials in a respectful and constructive manner. Here is contact information for the members of the New Orleans City Council: <http://nolacitycouncil.com/meet/meet.asp>.

Further Resources:

BDS: The Global Campaign to Delegitimize Israel

<https://www.adl.org/education/resources/backgrounders/bds-the-global-campaign-to-delegitimize-israel>

The ABCs of BDS

<http://israelactionnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/ABCs-of-BDS-9-8-16-final-.pdf>

NOLA Council passes pro-Palestinian group's "BDS legislation"

<http://www.sjlmag.com/2018/01/nola-council-passes-pro-palestinian.html>