



The Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC) is a wide coalition of the largest Palestinian mass organizations, trade unions, networks and organizations.

BNC member organizations:

Council of National and Islamic Forces in Palestine

Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO)

Palestinian Nat'l Institute for NGOs

Global Palestine Right of Return Coalition

Palestinian Trade Union Coalition for BDS (PTUC-BDS)

Federation of Indep. Trade Unions

Gen. Union of Palestinian Workers

Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions

Gen. Union of Palestinian Women

Union of Palestinian Farmers

Gen. Union of Palestinian Teachers

Gen. Union of Palestinian Writers

Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees (PFUUPE)

Union of Professional Associations

Gen. Union of Palestinian Peasants

Union of Public Employees in Palestine-Civil Sector

Grassroots Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign (STW)

Nat'l Committee for Grassroots Resistance

Pal. Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI)

Nat'l Committee to Commemorate the Nakba

Civic Coalition for the Defense of Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem

Coalition for Jerusalem

Union of Pal. Charitable Organizations

Palestinian Economic Monitor

Union of Youth Activity Centers-Palestine Refugee Camps

Occupied Palestine and Syrian Golan Heights Initiative

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Palestinian civil society warns Irish company against purchase of Israeli exporter

<http://www.bdsmovement.net/2011/bnc-warns-irish-company-7732>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC), a Palestinian civil society coalition leading a global boycott Israel campaign, has urged Irish fresh produce company Total Produce not to purchase ailing Israeli exporter Agrexco.

In a letter to Total Produce published today, the coalition details “Agrexco’s complicity with Israeli war crimes and illegal activities in the colonial settlements built on occupied Palestinian land”.

Partly-owned by the Israeli government, Agrexco is responsible for the export of 60-70% of the agricultural produce grown in Israel’s illegal settlements in occupied Palestinian territory.

In its letter, the BNC expresses deep concern at reports the Irish company is considering making a bid for Agrexco and warned that should it make the purchase, Total “will be targeted in a similar way” to Agrexco.

“We urge you to forgo this ill-conceived idea of buying a company that markets most of the illegal produce of Israel’s colonial settlements and that has suffered a fatal financial blow,” the letter states, “partly as a result of a vigorous boycott that will no doubt continue regardless who the new owners may be.”

Agrexco has recently suffered acute financial problems that have led to bankruptcy proceedings being brought against them in the Israeli capital Tel Aviv. In June, Israeli business publication Globes reported “heavy losses” for Agrexco, as the fresh produce company struggled to manage its debt. Fruitnet.com recently reported the company owed creditors €106 million.

Agrexco has been a prime target of Palestinian solidarity activists calling for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel.

A new coalition of European campaigners last month promised to “put an end to Agrexco’s presence in Europe”. Twenty-three groups signed a declaration saying they had established mechanisms to coordinate boycott campaigns and court actions against the exporter.

The alliance of European groups including the French Coalition contre Agrexco have set Saturday 26 November as a pan-European day of action against the company.

Campaigners have drawn attention to the exporter's involvement with illegal Israeli settlements with stunts, pickets and direct action. In Milan in June, activists delivered gift baskets of rotten fruit and vegetables to the company's HQ, symbolizing Palestinian agricultural products rotting at Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank, while Agrexco freely exports to Europe.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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NOTES FOR EDITORS:

* The full text of the BNC letter to Total Produce has been published at:
www.bdsmovement.net/2011/total-produce-letter-7705

* Sources: "Only one bid for Agrexco", Globes, 26 July: <http://bit.ly/pd8PQ3> ; "Agrexco proposes 35% haircut to bondholders", Globes, 23 June: <http://bit.ly/nqk1qY> "Agrexco trustee wants worker cuts", Fruitnet.com, 18 July: <http://bit.ly/oayIrl> "Agrexco Agricultural Export Company", WhoProfits.org database

* Sold under brand names such as Carmel, Coral, Biotop and Eco-Fresh, Agrexco products from illegal West Bank settlements have routinely been mislabelled and submitted with papers claiming they originate inside the Green Line. Such attempts to fraudulently qualify them for preferential customs treatment under the EU-Israel Association Agreement have led to censure in the British Parliament.

* The EU Court of Justice has ruled that settlement produce should not qualify for such preferential treatment. In February 2011, a report of the commercial court in Montpellier, France, found that Carmel Agrexco deliberately misled customs officials about the origin of their produce.

* The Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC) is a broadest coalition of Palestinian civil society groups and includes political parties, trade unions, NGOs and networks.