

24/06/2016

Question for written answer to the Commission Martina Anderson (GUE/NGL), [E-005122-16](#)

Subject: Boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement and freedom of expression

As some Member States move to criminalise the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement, more than 350 European civil society organisations recently released a statement regarding the need for the EU to protect the right to freedom of expression for BDS activists.

Amnesty International has recently declared it 'is concerned for the safety and liberty of Palestinian human rights defender Omar Barghouti, and other BDS activists', following recent threats made against BDS activists.

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) recently stated that it 'formally recognises and reaffirms the right of individuals to peacefully participate in and call for boycott, divestment, and sanction (BDS) measures to protest against the Israeli government occupation and discrimination policies, and urges States to respect and uphold related rights of freedom of expression, opinion, association, and assembly'.

1. How does the Commission assess the statement — made at an anti-BDS conference in Jerusalem on 28 March 2016 attended by the EU representative in Israel — of Israeli Minister of Intelligence Yisrael Katz that 'targeted civil eliminations' should be carried out against Palestinian and international leaders of the BDS movement?

2. Will the Commission commit to defending BDS activists' right to exercise their democratic freedom of expression?

Answer given by Vice-President Mogherini on behalf of the Commission

The EU firmly condemns threats and violence against human rights defenders under all circumstances. The EU regularly raises questions related to the protection of human rights and human rights defenders in its dialogue with the Israeli authorities, and calls on both Israel and the Palestinians to refrain from provocation and to resolutely fight incitement and hate speech.

The EU stands firm in protecting freedom of expression and freedom of association in line with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which is applicable on EU Member States' territory, including with regard to BDS actions carried out on this territory. Freedom of expression, as underlined by the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, is also applicable to information or ideas "that offend, shock or disturb the State or any sector of the population". The EU rejects the BDS campaign's attempts to isolate Israel and is opposed to any boycott of Israel.

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