

Reasons to vote “no” in the BDS referendum:

1. You believe that the TSSU should focus on local issues. There are more than enough social justice issues here at home; why is the TSSU venturing into international issues?
2. You look around at potential international issues and you see that the deaths in Syria are hundreds of times more than those in Israel/Palestine and Sudan has recently been called “the greatest humanitarian crisis since 1945”.
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-39238808> Why the preoccupation with Israel?
3. You care passionately about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the suffering of Palestinians and you want the occupation to end. But you recognize that BDS won't solve the conflict and will actually make it more entrenched because it cannot be resolved through changes by just one side (which is what the BDS resolution demands). **The BDS referendum makes it look like Israel is the sole cause of the conflict.** This can be true only if we ignore facts. As academics we are taught that looking narrowly, and excluding historical and contextual information blinds us. It would be like Trump looking narrowly only at the victims of the San Bernardino terrorist attack and deciding to ban Muslims. BDS is a one sided perspective, otherwise called propaganda. When we widen the context we see that
 - a. Israel has been attacked by surrounding countries (Egypt, Jordan, Syria) since its inception in 1948 with the stated purpose of extinguishing it.
 - b. Israel occupied the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights as a result of a **defensive** war in 1967 **and tried to trade back land for peace and recognition** (which it eventually did with Egypt – gave back the Sinai in exchange for peace). It was met by this response from the Arab League in 1967: no peace, no negotiations, and no recognition. BDS continues this stance. Hamas still refuses to accept Israel's existence.
 - c. When Israel withdrew from Gaza the result was to provide Hamas a place from which it could increase its attacks against Israel. So Israel cannot withdraw unilaterally from the West Bank and end the occupation without a negotiated peace that includes recognition. The BDS stance of no collaboration makes this impossible.

Arab and Palestinian leadership bear some responsibility for the current situation. (Read a Palestinian human rights activist's views of the Palestinian leadership's role: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-palestinian-case-against-bds>). Putting pressure on one side (Israel) without putting pressure on the Palestinian leadership ignores the reality of the conflict and further polarizes the sides.

4. You respect moderates on both sides who want to make peace. You recognize BDS's prohibition against dialogue and collaboration (under the name "normalization") as a continuation of the Arab League's 1967 policy of "no peace, no negotiations, and no recognition", a policy that has prevented peace. You respect Chief Robert Joseph's call for defeat of BDS (at UBC) and agree that no solution will come without dialogue. <http://www.ubyssey.ca/opinion/chief-robert-joseph-bds-thoughts-413/>
5. You see that BDS provides no solutions and its ultimate goal is not to rectify alleged human right violations in the West Bank, nor is it to end the occupation, but to defame Israel, weaken her support worldwide and eventually bring about her destruction. Omar Barghouti, its founder, has stated he does not support a 2 state solution and has stated that BDS will not end if Israel ends the occupation (Hear it in his own words in this video http://www.stopbds.com/?page_id=48). In his lecture at UCLA on January 15, 2014, he stated that Jews in Israel are not entitled to any form of self-determination, on any piece of land, however slim. They are not a people, he proclaimed, and the UN principle of the right to self-determination does not apply to them. <http://jewishjournal.com/opinion/126296/> Norman Finkelstein, who is adamantly against the occupation, and supports action against Israel to that end, says it is unacceptable that BDS does not recognize Israel's right to exist, which goes against the International Court of Justice. <http://mondoweiss.net/2012/02/norman-finkelstein-slams-the-bds-movement-calling-it-a-cult/>
6. You think this complex conflict deserves more in depth analysis. The United Church spent 2 years researching how to word their resolution. They commissioned a complex report that acknowledged and made explicit the one sidedness of the BDS resolution. <http://cusj.org/wp-content/uploads/israel-palestine-report-United-Church.pdf>
7. You recognize that singling out one country for condemnation is wrong. A legal ruling at McGill on BDS concluded that targeting one and only one country is discriminatory and violated their equity clause. It said that the Students' Society of McGill University could target a policy such as an occupation, but not a country as a whole. <http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Reference-Re-Legality-of-BDS-Motion-and-Similar-Motions.pdf>
8. You are concerned about hate generated by the BDS campaign. There are many examples of this, and most recently at McGill an elected student tweeted "punch a Zionist". Hate campaigns associated with BDS are not limited to North America or to Jews. In Palestine, moderate Palestinians who attempt any kind of dialogue are subjected to severe hate campaigns. For example, women who played sports with Israelis have been kicked off their teams and ostracized, and moderate leaders who have been involved in dialogue projects have been threatened.

9. You don't believe in academic boycott, but in dialogue and free exchange of ideas. Noam Chomsky, who does not support a cultural or academic boycott, said, "(If) Tel Aviv University is boycotted because Israel violates human rights at home, then why not boycott Harvard because of far greater violations by the US?"
<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/upfront/2016/02/noam-chomsky-opposes-cultural-boycott-israel-160201110337640.html>

10. You recognize Israel's right to exist and recognize the history of anti-Semitism in Arab lands. BDS asks for the return of all Palestinian Arab refugees, which would make Israel no longer a Jewish state. Even Noam Chomsky and Norman Finkelstein, who are against the occupation and support some of the BDS principles, are against the inclusion of the clause to return refugees. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were ethnically cleansed from Arab lands in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The number of Jewish refugees was at least as great as the number of Palestinian refugees. The result is that there are only a handful of Jews in Arab lands, and Jews do not hold any political positions there. There has been no indication that a one state solution with a Palestinian majority would not lead to the same outcome, especially given the hateful rhetoric and ban on collaboration with Jews. On the other hand, in Israel, there are 17 Arab members of parliament and an Arab Supreme Court judge, and Arabs are full citizens with voting rights.

Notes:

1. Although Zionism has been painted to be evil, the word, coined in the late 1800's, was a name for the movement to return to a Jewish (cultural) homeland. Clarification: Jewish here refers not a religion but to a people/nation/tribe. Just like in some First Nations tribes, Jewish membership is passed down matrilineally, and Zionism refers to a people who share a common history and desire to return to their ancestral homeland (which is home to the graves and stories of their ancestors). Simply put, Zionism is the national liberation movement of the Jewish people. The hate campaign against Israel has distorted the word to mean Jewish expansionism.