

19.06.2025

## Statement on the Classification of BDS as Extremist and Anti-Constitutional

The report for the year 2024 published by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (the German domestic intelligence agency) on 10.6.2025 classifies a number of “BDS-affiliated” groups, as well as groups that “support the movement and its demands” as “confirmed extremist endeavors.” These include “BDS-Berlin,” “BDS-Bonn,” “Jüdische Stimme für gerechten Frieden in Nahost e.V.” (Jewish Voice for a Just Peace in the Middle East e.V.) and “Palästina Spricht” (Palestine Speaks).<sup>1</sup> In its report for the past year, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution classified BDS as a case of “suspected extremism.” The report of the Berlin Office for the Protection of the Constitution for the year 2024, which was published in a press version on May 20, 2025, lists both the “Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)” campaign and the “BDS National Committee” under the category “Extremist Organizations and Groups” in the “Foreign Country-Related Extremism Field of Observation (Excluding Islamism).”<sup>2</sup> BDS and the aforementioned groups are accused of “foreign country-related extremism,” which is “always directed against the interests of the Federal Republic of Germany abroad or the peaceful coexistence of peoples as defined in Article 26 (1) of the Basic Law.”<sup>3</sup>

We, as organizations behind this statement, are not signatories of the BDS campaign. However, we fear negative and potentially far-reaching effects on universities as places of controversial debate and social engagement.<sup>4</sup> Many people involved in the BDS movement in Germany are students who could be targeted by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution if they are classified as extremist. As with the widely criticized “Radikalenerlass” (anti-radicalism decree), these classifications increasingly place universities within the scope of state surveillance. The political pressure not to provide public venues to groups deemed to be anti-constitutional effectively leads to the cancellation of events and curtails university autonomy. This creates a chilling effect: academics avoid certain topics out of fear of surveillance and stigmatization. This classification can also influence the allocation of third-party funding. Funding institutions could reject projects if the individuals involved are considered to be “BDS-affiliated.” The allocation of state funding is thus increasingly based on the criteria of security agencies rather than on scientific standards.

The justification for designating BDS as an “extremist movement” is based on a misrepresentation of the goals of the BDS campaign. The Office for the Protection of the Constitution interprets BDS’s first goal—the “end of the occupation of all Arab lands” by Israel—as meaning that the BDS movement aims to abolish the State of Israel and denies its right to exist. This interpretation is completely unfounded. The original BDS call from 2005 clearly states that the campaign is not about denying Israel’s right to exist, but about enforcing international human rights law—in particular ending the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories, equal rights for Palestinians and the right of return.<sup>5</sup>

These aims of the BDS movement are in line with international law and, to a large

1 <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/publikationen/themen/sicherheit/BMI25029-vsb2024.pdf>

2 <https://www.berlin.de/sen/inneres/verfassungsschutz/publikationen/verfassungsschutzberichte/>

3 Ibid, p. 24.

4 <https://verfassungsblog.de/freiheit-im-politischen-meinungskampf/>

5 <https://bdsmovement.net/bds-call>

extent, with the declared positions of the German government, which recognizes an Israeli state within its 1967 borders. The fact that the occupation of Palestinian territory violates peremptory international law, that Israel is obliged to end it immediately, and that third countries are prohibited from providing support was last confirmed and explained thoroughly by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion of July 19, 2024.<sup>6</sup> Equal rights are also one of the German government's goals. And there is also compelling reasoning under international law for a right of return, as the Research Services of the Bundestag have determined.<sup>7</sup>

The means employed by the BDS movement—boycotts, sanctions and divestment—are non-violent and have been supported by Germany in other contexts, such as against South Africa and most recently Russia. These measures are also gaining increasing support from many countries with respect to Israel: France, the UK and Canada have announced that they are considering steps under international law, including targeted sanctions.<sup>8</sup>

The classification of BDS as an extremist movement constitutes an encroachment on freedom of association, as this label carries considerable public stigma and impairs organizational autonomy as a result of state-sponsored misrepresentation.<sup>9</sup> Calls for boycotts, sanctions and divestment, which BDS stands for, are protected by freedom of expression.<sup>10</sup>

Alliance for Critical Scholarship in Solidarity (KriSol)

Humanistische Union

Israelis for Peace

Kommission Nahost pax christi

6 <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/186>

7 <https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/479396/d55fb0aa176b46cca5ca159a30401174/wd-2-219-06-pdf-data.pdf>

8 <https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2025/05/19/joint-statement-from-the-leaders-of-the-united-kingdom-france-and-canada-on-the-situation-in-gaza-and-the-west-bank>

9 [https://www.bundesverfassungsgericht.de/SharedDocs/Entscheidungen/DE/2022/05/rk20220531\\_1bvr009821.html](https://www.bundesverfassungsgericht.de/SharedDocs/Entscheidungen/DE/2022/05/rk20220531_1bvr009821.html)

10 <https://verfassungsblog.de/freiheit-im-politischen-meinungskampf/>