

For nearly twenty years, under the leadership of Middle East historian Efraim Karsh and his Middle East and Mediterranean Studies Programme, Kings College London was a beacon of light with respect to the study of Israel and the Middle East. King's has a superior reputation as one of Britain's foremost research and teaching institutions and the third-oldest university in the United Kingdom, having been founded by King George IV and the Duke of Wellington in 1829.

But the BDS movement does not respect an academic pedigree any more than it does Israel. Efforts are again underway to infiltrate King's with the goal of converting students and faculty to the almost religious viewpoint that the Jewish state is the source of all evil in the Middle East and beyond. At the upcoming Student General Meeting this Tuesday a motion proposed three months ago has resurfaced calling on Kings "to divest from Israel" and to "raise awareness of Israel's illegal occupation."

Moreover, the proposal calls to "pressure King's College London to divest from Israel", to "promote resolutions condemning Israeli violations of international law" and to "affiliate KCL to the Palestine BDS National Committee." Additionally, advocates of this motion would like "a plaque in all KCLSU student centres acknowledging that KCLSU formally supported the BDS call."

The BDS movement smacks of anti-Semitism: Targeting Israel and its advocates, it holds the world's only Jewish state to a far different and unrealistically high standard than any other democracy. Its supporters claim that their criticism is legitimate and is due to their "real concern" for the well being of Palestinians. Amidst flowery anti-imperialist rhetoric, the movement misleadingly implies that ending specific Israeli policies, deemed "apartheid" practices, would satisfy its backers. In fact, BDS supporters explicitly call for the destruction of Israel and its replacement by a bi-national state, the standard euphemism for an Arab/Muslim state in which Jews will be reduced to a status of permanent, underprivileged minority.

Unfortunately, academia is dominated by a loud minority of individuals who

support BDS and who shape campus discussions regarding Israel. Consequently, it is the extreme voices that set the tone while the more moderate forces give in without much of a fight. All has led to a stifling environment where, in the name of free speech, sympathizers of the BDS movement have undermined free speech by ignoring, censoring, or white-washing uncomfortable and inconvenient truths.

In-fact, even the Palestinian Authority itself does not support the boycott movement, something that Mahmoud Abbas himself stated quite explicitly. Others Israel critics, like Norman Finkelstein who has accused Jews of using the Holocaust for their own gain, has described the BDS movement as "a hypocritical, dishonest cult" led by "dishonest gurus" who want to "selectively enforce the law" by posing as human rights activists.

That the BDS movement and its supporters, now tacitly endorsed by many departments and professors, have been given a platform to single out Israel as absolutely the worst society on Earth is deeply distressing and is nothing less than a "ready-made conclusion" of the most extreme sort.

BDSers intentionally ignore what Palestinians say in Arabic about their political demands or national identity, much less their attitudes toward Israelis, a common feature of American and European engagement with the Middle East.

The selective prosecution of the Jewish state, the mendacity of its accusers, and their willingness to abuse free speech to single out Israel - even as Syrians die by the thousands - should be a wakeup call to reality. It should also remind Kings College London of its long tradition of research and scholarship and cause the university to stand up against polemicists and abusers rather than legitimize them by offering a platform to promote their racist agenda.