

To the River Valley Co-op Board of Directors,

We, the workers, member-owners, and community that comprise River Valley Co-op, propose a plan for a change to Co-op policy that will align the Co-op with our collective values. In light of the Co-op's stance in issuing a ceasefire resolution, we now invite the Co-op to join the community in taking the next step by removing products that support Israeli apartheid and the continued oppression of the Palestinian people. As people of conscience, we have been moved to action by the ongoing violence in Palestine. Some of us are intimately affected by this violence through our families and loved ones, while others of us are connected through our cultural histories. All of us, however, are united by the understanding that the struggle for justice in Palestine is deeply connected to justice in our own society, and that we have a particular responsibility and power in the United States to effect change.

OUR MOTIVATION

1. **Since October, the Israeli government has killed 186,000 people in Gaza**, according to a July 5 article in the Lancet medical journal. That number includes tens of thousands of children, and amounts to approximately 8% of the Gazan population. Israel has bombed hospitals, destroyed schools, and targeted aid workers, all while restricting basic supplies to 2 million people. Additionally, more than 500 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli military and armed settlers in the West Bank. [\(1\)](#) [\(2\)](#) [\(3\)](#)
2. **Israel is an apartheid state**, as ruled by the International Court of Justice and many other human rights organizations around the world. Israel's current violence is only the latest in its oppression of the Palestinian people. Apartheid, defined as a state-sanctioned system of discrimination based on race, is enforced on Palestinians through fragmentation, dispossession, occupation, and segregation. Israel excludes Palestinians from full citizenship and denies them basic human rights. [\(1\)](#) [\(2\)](#) [\(3\)](#) [\(4\)](#) [\(5\)](#)
3. **The United States is complicit in Israel's conduct**. The United States has supported Israel's criminal activity unconditionally through military aid, diplomatic cover, and economic support. US foreign policy has so far prioritized the interests of the military industrial complex over the peace, dignity, and well-being of those in the Middle East and the United States. An end to unconditional US support for Israel is a necessary condition for justice in Palestine. [\(1\)](#) [\(2\)](#) [\(3\)](#)

WHERE WE STAND

1. **We stand against all forms of racism**. We oppose all forms of racism, including anti-Arab, anti-Muslim, and antisemitic racism. We understand that criticism of Israel is not equivalent to antisemitism. Israel's actions have not only harmed Palestinians, but also contribute to a lack of peace and security for Jews in Israel and around the world. [\(1\)](#)
2. **We stand for apartheid-free communities**. Our communities stand firmly against Israel's violence. The Co-op recently published a statement in support of a ceasefire. We have passed ceasefire resolutions in both Northampton and Easthampton city councils

and in many surrounding towns; in UFCW Local 1459, which represents the workers at River Valley Co-op; and in the Western Mass Area Labor Federation. National Co-op Grocers, of which River Valley Co-op is a member, has also called for a ceasefire. As a co-op, we are committed both to member-owner democracy and social justice. The Co-op has proudly taken public stances in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and the LGBTQ+ community, and invested significant resources into climate action. The Co-op also uses its purchasing discretion to enact its values by stocking wholesome, local, and fair trade products. Using our collective economic power to stand against apartheid is a straightforward continuation of this community's values. [\(1\)](#) [\(2\)](#) [\(3\)](#) [\(4\)](#)

HOW WE CAN HAVE AN IMPACT

Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) is a nonviolent movement launched by Palestinian civil society in 2005. Modeled on the Anti-Apartheid campaign that contributed to the end of apartheid in South Africa, BDS is a peaceful means of withdrawing international economic support for Israeli apartheid. This economic pressure has three dimensions:

1. **Boycotts** involve withdrawing support from Israel's apartheid regime, complicit Israeli sporting, cultural and academic institutions, and from all Israeli and international companies engaged in violations of Palestinian human rights.
2. **Divestment** campaigns urge banks, local councils, churches, pension funds and universities to withdraw investments from the State of Israel and all Israeli and international companies that sustain Israeli apartheid.
3. **Sanctions** campaigns pressure governments to fulfill their legal obligations to end Israeli apartheid, and not aid or assist its maintenance, by banning business with illegal Israeli settlements, ending military trade and free-trade agreements, as well as suspending Israel's membership in international forums such as UN bodies and FIFA.

This campaign of economic pressure will continue until Israel complies with international law and recognizes the Palestinian right to self-determination by meeting the following conditions:

1. **Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall.**
2. **Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality.**
3. **Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194.**

BDS illuminates our economic connection to Israel in the United States, using what Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in his endorsement of the Palestinian call for BDS, described as a “nonviolent toolbox” that derives its power from “a critical mass of support, both inside and outside the country.” BDS gives us a path forward to enact our values in our community and be part of a global movement for change. We can collectively implement the principles and practice of BDS here at River Valley Co-op. [\(1\)](#) [\(2\)](#)

OUR PROPOSAL FOR OUR CO-OP

1. The River Valley Co-op will de-shelve products made in Israel.
2. The River Valley Co-op will not purchase products made in Israel.
3. This policy will remain in effect until:
 - a. Israel ends its occupation of Palestinian lands, consistent with International Court of Justice Opinion of July 19, 2024, and dismantles the Wall, consistent with International Court of Justice Opinion of July 9, 2004.
 - b. Israel recognizes the fundamental right of Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality.
 - c. Israel respects the rights of Palestinian refugees “wishing to return to their homes and live in peace with their neighbors” consistent with UN resolution 194.