

Finkelstein comments:

A few weeks ago I spoke briefly on a Left Forum panel.

Quoting my remarks, As'ad Abu Khalil posted this comment on Sunday, 23 June:

“How does one propose to win support for the Palestinian cause based on international law yet not support two states? That just doesn’t make any sense to me,” he [said](#).” Let me simplify it for you: **not everybody argues on international law, OK?** You want to win an argument by deliberately misrepresenting the arguments of the other side--to which you once belonged.

Hereafter is an exchange of emails between us.

FINKELSTEIN:

Let me simplify it for you: *that's exactly what Israel says.*

AbuKhalil:

exactly. Why should I care about international law? The Zionist movement profited from ignoring international law and so can we.

FINKELSTEIN:

Then just say, *I don't care about international law.*

That's of course your right, which I stated at the panel.

But BDS repeatedly says it *is* anchored in international law;

And international law is as clear on Israel's status as a State as it is on the illegality of Israeli settlements.

It's useful to think twice before joining in a lynch mob.

AbuKhalil:

I never believed in the justice or efficacy of international law: not during the Cold War, and certainly less so during the era of US dominance and hegemony.

As for what BDS “says” or does not say: you treat it as a political party in the Stalinist tradition: as if there is one party line and all should adhere. Well, I support BDS but categorically reject two-state.

And no: even on the settlement issue; I am opposed to Israel long before there was one Jewish settlement and yes, you may post this exchange
I don't know what you mean by lynch mob: this does not mean anything to me, as this term has been used by states and oppressors against people.

FINKELSTEIN:

You leveled a serious accusation on your web site.

You alleged that I "want to win an argument by deliberately misrepresenting the arguments of the other side."

You have an obligation to support this accusation.

What did I deliberately misrepresent?

Doesn't the official BDS CALL (July 2005) have a 3-point platform that it claims is based on "the precepts of international law"?

I expect that you will either clearly state my misrepresentation or issue an *unambiguous* and *unequivocal* retraction.

AbuKhalil:

Norman: I did not know that you were talking about a newsletter or the politburo of an organization. For me BDS is not a Leninist party: but a broad movement that attracts people who don't meet in cell meetings. I never read the specific issue of BDS CALL or ANY issue of that group. But to facilitate your own arguments, you insist on treating the movement as a political party with an official mouthpiece.

FINKELSTEIN:

You expect me to believe that you are unaware of a specific movement and organizational structure called BDS; that it claims to represent "Palestinian civil society"; that it issued a "BDS Call" in 2005; that it has a three-point platform; that it claims to be anchored in international law; and that I referred to this BDS and none other (because there is no other, except in your imagination) in the remarks you quoted.

In the name of solidarity with the Oppressed, am I now also obliged to believe in the Tooth Fairy?

It is sometimes more graceful and dignified to acknowledge an error than to brazen it out.

AbuKhalil:

I know that there is a guy called barghouti and I know that they must have some organizational form bec I read that they never took a stance about the existence of Israel but I—like thousands of others who supoprt BDS—never bothered to follow them or care. this is like reducing the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa to one front or organization. But yes, believe it or not, I never ever heard of BDS Call or even if Charter. I have more interesting things to read. What error do you want me to admit? that I know of this organziation and even follow its literature? Why then when you attack them specific that you are attacking a group and not the movement as a whole.

FINKELSTEIN:

So, you are only vaguely aware of "a guy called Barghouti," etc.

"What a tangled web we weave,/When first we practice to deceive."

Your last sentence is unintelligible.

The exchange has reached the point of vanishing returns.

I will post it on my website.

You are free to comment further on your own website.

POSTSCRIPT:

Jamie Stern-Weiner informs me that Abukhalil has“spoken at a conference on BDS (<http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/15803>; <http://youtube.com/watch?v=ehkwVbknoGA>) and written on the topic (<http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/4289>).”