

Paul Simon
1619 Broadway, Suite 500,
New York, NY, 10019 USA

Joel.amsterdam@concordmusicgroup.com

Berlin, June 24, 2011

Dear Paul Simon,

We were dismayed to read that you're planning to perform in Tel Aviv on July 31, 2011¹

For decades, Israel has been systematically violating Palestinian human rights: keeping millions of Palestinians in the West Bank under Israeli martial-law with no civil rights, maintaining an illegal siege on Gaza, denying the UN sanctioned 1948 Palestinian refugees right of return and compensation, and implementing dozens of racist and discriminatory apartheid laws² inside Israel. Such violations, documented³ by respected human-rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Oxfam, have been long recognized as unlawful by the UN.

Yet, while Israel continues to implement its illegal policies and cannot even bring itself to freeze the illegal construction of additional Jewish-only settlements in the occupied West Bank, it is not even slightly held accountable by Western governments for its continued systematic violation of human-rights (see UN Special Rapporteur Richard Falk's report⁴).

For this reason, inspired by the pivotal role the boycott movement has played in ending apartheid in South-Africa, hundreds of artists, academics, filmmakers, and writers worldwide have declared their support for the Palestinian-led BDS campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions

As you may have heard, there is a call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions⁵ (BDS) against Israel until it complies with international law and ends its decades-long systematic oppression of the Palestinian people.

¹ <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4061746,00.html>

² <http://www.adalah.org/eng/backgroundlegalsystem.php>

³ <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/ngos-gaza-civilians-continue-suffer-2010-11-30>

⁴ <http://electronicintifada.net/content/un-will-be-judged-whether-it-upholds-palestinian-rights/9099>

⁵ <http://bdsmovement.net/?q=node/52>

This call, launched by over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations, is supported by Archbishop Desmond Tutu⁶, the international alliance Artists Against Apartheid⁷, South-African Artists Against Apartheid⁸, Creative Workers Union of South Africa, 500 Montreal artists⁹, 200 Irish artists¹⁰, and many acclaimed cultural figures worldwide¹¹ including director Ken Loach, art critic John Berger, musician Brian Eno, UK duo Massive Attack¹² and classical guitarist John Williams.

In 1985, Steven Van Zandt and a group of 49 musicians, among them Bruce Springsteen, Ringo Starr, Gil Scott Heron, Miles Davis, collaborated on a song called "Sun City"¹³, in which they pledged they would never perform at Sun City Festival (South Africa) because to do so would have meant endorsing the South African apartheid regime and its institutionalised form of racism.

We urge you to join them in heeding the call Palestinian civil society has placed in 2005.

Please, don't create another "Graceland"¹⁴

Please don't collaborate with oppression and racism.

Please don't play for apartheid.

Berlin Academic Boycott bacademic.b@googlemail.com
BDS Group Berlin bdsmovement-Berlin@web.de

This open letter is supported by the following organisations and individuals (June 24, 2011):

Women in Black, Vienna
Critical Jewish Voice, Austria

Contact: bdsmovement-Berlin@web.de

⁶ <http://www.timeslive.co.za/world/article675369.ece/Israeli-ties--a-chance-to-do-the-right-thing>

⁷ <http://www.artistsagainstapartheid.org/>

⁸ <http://www.southafricanartistsagainstapartheid.com/2010/11/declaration.html>

⁹ <http://www.tadamon.ca/post/5824>

¹⁰ <http://www.ipsc.ie/archives/pledge/>

¹¹ <http://pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1291>

¹² <http://www.newstatesman.com/music/2010/09/israel-interview-boycott-naja>

¹³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sun_City_%28song%29

¹⁴ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/musicblog/2010/may/26/musicians-boycott-countries>