

Israel to begin refusing to admit groups leading the BDS movement

The government declared that members of 20 organizations will be barred entry for security reasons as of March 1.

by [Dina Kraft](#) in the [February 14, 2018](#) issue

([The Christian Science Monitor](#)) Israel plans to block entry for members of Jewish Voice for Peace and the American Friends Service Committee, among other groups that are part of the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement.

The campaign for Palestinian rights calls for an international boycott of Israeli companies and academic and cultural institutions.

In mid-January, Israel declared that members of 20 organizations in the BDS movement will be barred entry from the country as of March 1 for security reasons.

The move immediately drew fire, including from the targeted organizations themselves and their supporters, who said it was only further evidence of Israel's repression. Opposition to the action also was voiced by some in Israel and abroad who don't support BDS. They consider it to be not only counterproductive but corrosive to the country's democratic ideals.

"BDS is not an existential threat to Israel unless Israel acts in a way to make it one," said Jonathan Rynhold, a professor of political science at Bar-Ilan University outside Tel Aviv. "It is damaging Israel's reputation abroad."

Israel's action was made possible by an amendment to the March 2017 Law of Entry, which made it legal to block the leaders of BDS organizations from entering Israel.

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel said the law "violates the most basic tenets of democracy by making political opinions a consideration that may prevent non-citizens from entering Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territory."

Sharon Abraham-Weiss, executive director of ACRI, the country's version of the ACLU, said the law and now the plans for blocked entry reflect a growing intolerance for criticism on the part of Israel's government.

"We are concerned that the space for freedom of speech, which is a pillar of democracy, is shrinking," she said. "In a democratic country you want to hear various positions. And to limit criticism does not allow this kind of fundamental discourse."

A version of this article, which was edited on January 29, appears in the February 14 print edition under the title "Israel plans to bar supporters of BDS from entering country."