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# **The Changing Face of Palestinian Leadership**

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## **The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement**

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

**Master of Arts**

**In Politics**

at Massey University, Turitea

New Zealand

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2014

## ***Abstract***

The face of Palestinian leadership has developed and diversified greatly since the British Mandate period, with many groups claiming representation of the Palestinian people and the national movement. The unresolved matter of Palestinian leadership is central to Israeli occupation and any resolution. Established in 2005, the development and success of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement represents a new chapter in Palestinian leadership building upon Palestine's established history of popular resistance. This thesis examines the effects of the BDS movement on the direction and strength of Palestinian leadership and the Palestinian national movement. Using a distributed leadership framework, the research analyses how the grassroots, transnational nature of the BDS movement has modernised and globalised the Palestinian struggle. The difficult political environment of the occupation has caused formal Palestinian leadership to be greatly compromised through the restrictions tied to the Oslo Accords and formal peace process. The organisational structure of the BDS movement allows it to operate outside of these realms, counter-positioning itself against the failed US-led diplomacy. The thesis questions the use of the common comparison of BDS with the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa; the wider politics of the situation and relationships between Palestinian leadership bodies differs vastly from those of apartheid South Africa. The comparative thread throughout the research is two-fold: an objective comparison of the BDS movement with anti-apartheid movement in South Africa; and an analysis of BDS's own use of the comparison as a strategic and organisational tool. The recent rise of protest movements present an alternative to formal political institutions. The BDS movement represents a broader trend in political leadership as the advent of new media has shifted an element of power into grassroots mass movements. This thesis finds that the BDS movement has reintroduced grassroots resistance and leadership to the Palestinian political system. Its distributed leadership model has provided an alternative outlet that circumvents the restrictive formal political process. However, as the BDS movement does not seek the institutionalised power that any future Palestinian state requires, formal Palestinian leadership must incorporate the movement's grassroots elements traditional to Palestine.

## ***Acknowledgements***

Thank you to Dr. Nigel Parsons, long-suffering supervisor, whose passion for Palestinian politics started me on this path many years ago. You truly went above and beyond, for which I am eternally grateful. Thank you also to all the staff at Massey who assist post-graduate and distance students, especially those in the library and politics department, and provide amazing services. The Masterate Scholarship provided greatly appreciated financial incentive.

Thank you to Mum, after six years you are now relieved of your proof-reading duties. To my friends, you no longer have to hear about my thesis but thank you for always listening and providing much-needed distraction. I promise I'm done.

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## ***Abbreviations***

AHC	Arab Higher Committee
AIPAC	American Israeli Public Affairs Committee
ALF	Arab Liberation Front
ANC	African National Congress
BDS	Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions
BNC	BDS National Committee
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
EU	European Union
IDF	Israel Defence Forces
MDM	Mass Democratic Movement
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
oPt	Occupied Palestinian Territories
PA	Palestinian Authority
PACBI	Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel
PCP	Palestinian Communist Party (now PPP)
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
PPP	Palestinian People's Party (formerly PCP)
UDF	United Democratic Front
UN	United Nations
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNLU	Unified National Leadership of the Uprising

## ***Glossary***

Al-Nakba	'The Catastrophe' – the 1948 expulsion of Palestinians
Concertive action	The valued power of the strength of the aggregate
Green Line	Pre-1967 borders
Heterarchy	Unranked power sharing arrangements
Intifada	Uprising
The Quartet	Peace mediation team of the UN, EU, US, and Russia
Tafrigh	The placing of civilian members onto an organisation's payroll
Zakat	Tithe



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