



Is Penn BDS *Really* Concerned about Palestinian Human Rights?

If indeed Penn BDS is concerned with violations of international and human rights law, it is notable that they focus none of their attention on known human rights violators and oppressive governments such as exist in:

- [North Korea](#), where hundreds of thousands of political dissidents have been imprisoned and tortured, where the citizens are deprived of the basic freedoms of speech, religion, and movement, and where the government diverts food aid from the literally starving citizenry.
- [China](#), which the U.S. State Department calls “an authoritarian state” that practices “discrimination against women, minorities, and persons with disabilities; a coercive birth limitation policy, which in some cases resulted in forced abortion or forced sterilization” among many other grave human rights abuses.
- [Sudan](#), where security forces subject citizens to “unlawful killings” and “torture, beatings, rape, and other cruel, inhumane treatment,” where dissidents are tortured and imprisoned, and where government or government-aligned forces perpetrate “violence and discrimination against women, including female genital mutilation; child abuse, including sexual violence and recruitment of child soldiers,” and violence against ethnic minorities, forced and child labor.” Homosexual activity in Sudan is [a criminal offense](#).
- [Ethiopia](#), which, according to the U.S. government, restricts freedom of speech, the press, and assembly, where violence and discrimination against women, abuse of children, female genital mutilation, child sexual and human trafficking, discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities, slavery and child labor persist. Homosexual activity in Ethiopia is [a criminal offense](#).
- [Cuba](#), designated “a totalitarian state” by the U.S. State Department and known to deprive citizens of freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and association, freedom of movement, and limit freedom of religion. Numerous political prisoners are detained and subjected to “harsh and life-threatening prison conditions.”
- [Iran](#), which, even the United Nations noted, persecutes minorities and “human rights defenders, in particular women’s rights activists, journalists and government opponents,” where citizens are subject to “torture, arbitrary detentions and unfair trials,” and where “there was a noticeable increase in application of the death penalty, including in cases involving political opponents and juvenile offenders.” Homosexuality is a crime in Iran, [punishable by death](#).
- [Pakistan](#), which, according to the British government, has “a particularly high rate of violence against women, and discrimination enshrined in law,” where “millions of children work as bonded labour,” where religious and ethnic minorities “have

been the target of many violent attacks,” and where many people “do not have adequate access to justice or an effective rule of law.” Homosexuality activity in Pakistan is punishable by up to [life imprisonment](#).

- [Turkey](#), where police detain and abuse protesters, where ethnic minorities are [systematically denied](#) civil and political rights, and where freedom of speech and the press is so constrained that even reporting on the slaughter of 1.5 million Armenians by Ottoman forces is [a criminal act](#).
- And others.

If Penn BDS is specifically focused on the oppression of Arabs, then it is curious that they are not decrying the governments of:

- [Syria](#), which the U.S. Department of State says is under an “authoritarian regime,” has seen thousands of citizens killed by security forces, many under torture, and tens of thousands of others “disappeared.” Syria severely restricts civil liberties, freedoms of speech and press, freedoms of assembly and association, and freedoms of religion and movement. Violence and discrimination against women are pervasive, as are sexual exploitation of refugees, including minors, and discrimination against minorities. Homosexual activity in Syria is [a criminal offense](#).
- [Egypt](#), where, despite the “Arab Spring,” security forces continue to detain and abuse protesters, routinely abuse women, and where religious minorities continue to be subject to [repression and violence](#).
- [Lebanon](#), where there are unlawful killings, detention and the widespread use of torture, where the government restricts freedoms of speech and press, limits freedom of movement, discriminates against minorities, and where violence and discrimination against women persists, as does violence against children and child labor. Homosexual activity in Lebanon is [a criminal offense](#).
- [Iraq](#), where violence against women, trafficking, genital mutilation and honor crimes persist, and where detainees in prison were hung upside-down, whipped, beaten, given electric shocks and sodomized during torture sessions.
- [Saudi Arabia](#), where violations of human rights laws are enshrined in the Kingdom’s legal code, including the systemic discrimination against women and minorities, where citizens are subject to arbitrary arrest and detention, denial of fair and public trials, torture and abuse, restrictions on freedoms of speech, assembly, association, movement, and severe restrictions on religious freedom. Homosexual activity in Saudi Arabia is punishable by [flogging or death by stoning](#).
- [Bahrain](#), where international organizations contend that human rights abuses rise to the level of “‘crimes against humanity’ under international law” due to the systemic use of torture, and that the state violates the rights to freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention, and freedom of thought, conscience, opinion, expression, assembly, and religion.
- [Yemen](#), where even prior to the “Arab Spring” uprisings, the attempted suppression of which involved [human rights violations](#), government human rights abuses included arbitrary and unlawful killings, politically motivated disappearances, torture of civilians, arbitrary arrest and detention, denial of fair public trial, restrictions on freedoms of speech, the press, assembly, and religion, pervasive discrimination against women, child labor, and child trafficking. Homosexual activity in Yemen is punishable by [flogging or death by stoning](#).

- [Kuwait](#), where authorities limit freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, and religion, where human trafficking persists, where women do not enjoy equal rights under the law, and homosexuality is [a criminal offense](#).
- And others.

And if Penn BDS is even more particularly disturbed by the oppression of Palestinian Arabs, then one wonders why they are not protesting the governments of:

- [Jordan](#), where Palestinians have encountered discrimination and many are treated as foreigners and required to pay fees in foreign currency, making it difficult to enroll in Jordanian universities. Career options of Palestinians are limited to the private sector, access to decision-making circles and state institutions is denied. Many Jordanian citizens of Palestinian descent were recently [stripped of their citizenship](#), and with it numerous rights.
- Kuwait, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinian residents [were expelled](#) after the PLO supported Iraq in the first Gulf War, and where they are considered foreigners or “[Bedoons](#)” and denied civil rights.
- Saudi Arabia, where Palestinians are considered foreigners and are [under strict surveillance](#) and enjoy only very limited rights.
- Gaza, under the authority of Hamas, where [political freedom](#), [religious freedom](#) and [freedom of association](#) are severely curtailed, women’s rights are [limited](#), militant activity is [located in civilian centers](#) transforming residents into [human shields](#) and often causing them injury and death, human rights activists are [targeted](#), and homosexuality is [a criminal offense](#),
- [Syria](#), where Palestinian Arabs fare comparatively well, but where houses in refugee camps are of mud or crude concrete blocks, the water supply is not constant, most streets are unpaved, and the water and sewage systems, where they exist, are in need of upgrading and repair. Palestinians are [not allowed to vote](#) or run for office, nearly half of Palestinian families live at or below poverty levels, property ownership is restricted and Palestinians are forbidden to own farm land.
- [Lebanon](#), where basic human rights are denied to Palestinians, where they are legally prohibited from high-status professions including law, medicine, pharmacy and engineering, excluded by law from owning real estate, denied civil identity registration and with it access to basic health services, education, civil, social and economic rights, registration of marriages and registration of newborns. The Lebanese army severely restricts Palestinian refugee camps where curfews are in place, where residents pass through military checkpoints, and where walls are being constructed, isolating them from their surroundings. Palestinian Arabs have been subject to arbitrary arrest, detention, and torture and denied legal representation.