



CC all MSs

Dear Mark Drakeford, First Minister

We are writing to you concerning the UK government's 'Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) bill' or anti-boycott bill. We especially raise the potential implications of the bill for Wales and the existing devolution settlement.

Published last week and scheduled to receive its second reading on Monday 3 July, the anti-boycott bill will limit the ability of public authorities to make ethical choices about spending and investment. It will prevent public bodies, like local councils or universities, as well as the Welsh government, from cutting ties with companies engaged in human rights abuses or environmental destruction committed in a foreign country.

Given its potential impact on areas of devolved competence including local government, higher education and public sector procurement, this bill could represent a significant act of overreach by Westminster and encroachment onto the powers of the Welsh government and Senedd. It could, for instance, trample on the ethical commitments contained within Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act. We are particularly interested to know whether you are pursuing any legal avenues or seeking legal advice in relation to this bill or have considered withholding legislative consent on this issue.

Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) has produced a briefing on the anti-boycott bill which is attached in this email, and also linked [here](#).

The UK government says that this law is aimed at campaigns in support of Palestinian rights. The bill even singles out Israel, alongside the 'Occupied Palestinian Territories' and 'Occupied Golan Heights', by name, as territories that it explicitly protects from public sector boycotts. This actively promotes impunity for violations of international law and well-documented discrimination against Palestinians. Despite assertions that foreign policy is unchanged, for the first time, a piece of British legislation will require Israel and the territories it illegally occupies to be treated in the same way, departing from decades of international consensus on the illegality of settlements.

It is crucial to protect the right to campaign for Israel to be held to account for its increasingly violent violations of the rights of the Palestinian people and of international law. But other progressive movements who use boycott or divestment tactics will also be affected. It could hit campaigns against deforestation, environmental pollution, and the exploitation of children and workers.

PSC is one of nearly 70 civil society organisations, including trade unions, charities, NGOs, faith, climate justice, human rights, and solidarity organisations, who are calling for this dangerous bill to be scrapped and on opposition parties to vote against it. Signatories to the Right to Boycott statement include Unison, Unite, Friends of the Earth, CND and the Methodist Church. A full list can be found here: [Right to Boycott | Protect the right to boycott](#)

Boycott and divestment campaigns provide a peaceful way for people to push for justice and have been used by social movements across the world to pressure regimes, institutions, or companies to change abusive, discriminatory, or illegal practices.

Wales has a proud history of support for these progressive movements, from the famous refusal of renowned poet and abolitionist, Iolo Morganwg, to stock sugar produced on slave plantations in his shop in Cowbridge during the late eighteenth century, to the best-known boycott of them all – the drive to end apartheid in South Africa. As you know, the magnificent role played by the Wales Anti-Apartheid Movement (WAAM) in that campaign was subsequently celebrated by Nelson Mandela in Cardiff in 1998, when receiving the Freedom of the City:

*'The knowledge that local authorities all over Wales were banning apartheid products from canteens and schools - and that the universities, the Welsh Rugby Union, and the choirs had cut their links - was a great inspiration to us in our struggle.'*

Alarming, had the anti-boycott bill been in place at the time, many of these impressive acts of solidarity would have been illegal.

The anti-boycott bill threatens to erode local democracy, weaken devolution, restrict freedom of expression, and undermine campaigns for social and climate justice. We hope that you will use your influence as First Minister to speak out against this damaging legislation and urge your party colleagues at Westminster to do the same. For opposition parties who believe in democracy, human rights and climate justice, abstention on this issue should quite simply not be an option. We would be very grateful for the opportunity to discuss this matter further with you.

Yours sincerely,

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