

"To act directly is to address the actual issue of your concern. If you're working against hunger, it might be simply giving someone a meal. If you're working against homelessness, it might be taking over an abandoned house and making it livable. If you want to stop military spending, it might be refusing to pay your income taxes."

—www.nonviolence.org

# Direct Action

## IT GETS YOUR MESSAGE HEARD

**A** direct action is a public, non-violent exercise of power to draw attention to injustice. It is an effective way to get your message heard, especially if people have come to accept injustice as routine. Direct action empowers by drawing new people into the movement. It doesn't require the cooperation of the authority to be effective. If the authorities intervene, you have a dramatic story for the media. If they ignore you, you can take it further! Direct action can also be empowering to participants: they find strength in solidarity, make an impact, and push the boundaries for change. Of course, direct action by itself is not enough: it is one strand of an overall strategy to achieve justice.

This fact sheet gives examples of direct action by activists working to end the illegal Israeli military occupation of Palestine. Their actions target the Israeli government, United States policies that support occupation, and multinational corporations that help sustain occupation. Examples

include: demonstrations, shareholder resolutions, divestment, boycott, and civil disobedience. We also suggest 5 things to think about when planning your action: safety, creativity, messaging, the media, and follow-up.

### A DIVERSITY OF ACTIONS

#### Demos

Moderate-sized public demos can be held without obtaining a permit as long as they

and has been parked strategically near CAT construction sites and anywhere large numbers of people gather (<http://bootcat.org/Boycott.html>).

#### Shareholder Resolutions

Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), Catholic Sisters of Loretto and Mercy Investment Group have purchased enough shares in Caterpillar Corporation to file a shareholder resolution. The resolution simply requests Caterpillar

### US CAMPAIGN NATIONAL DAYS OF ACTION—2005

- 3/20** Mobilization against the US occupation of Iraq and Israel's occupation of Palestine
- 4/13** Act against Caterpillar sales to Israel
- 6/5** Anniversary of occupation (mobilize against the wall)
- 9/28** 5th anniversary of the second intifada (call for divestment)
- 11/29** International Day of Solidarity w/ Palestinians (call for the right of return)

do not interfere with the flow of foot traffic on sidewalks or block roads. Small demos can be extremely effective when enhanced by strong, mobile visuals.

- Stop US Tax-Funded Aid to Israel Now (SUSTAIN) activists in Philadelphia have 10 foot high "Wall" panels with pictures of the illegal and destructive barrier Israel is building in the occupied Palestinian West Bank and East Jerusalem. The panels say "Made in the USA," and "Made with your Tax Dollars." The group uses the mobile panels at events where they want to display an alternate viewpoint or in areas of heavy traffic. (See also [www.stophthewall.org](http://www.stophthewall.org) for more ways to protest the Wall.)
- Bootcat.org in Boston covered the sides of a 15-seater van with large banners declaring "Caterpillar Destroys Palestinian Homes." The van has led processions of cars full of demonstrators to the CAT dealership outside of Boston,

to review whether or not the sale of its equipment to the Israeli army violates the corporation's *Code of Worldwide Business Conduct*, which requires it to "also take into account social, economic, political, and environmental priorities." In 2004, JVP and Catholic Sisters were able to bring forward a 4 percent vote of support for their resolution, exceeding the minimum number of votes required to re-introduce the resolution every year until CAT stops sales to Israel. For more information visit [www.catdestroyshomes.org](http://www.catdestroyshomes.org).

#### Boycott

This is one way to use economic pressure for justice (others include divestment and sanctions; each method requires different targets and strategies).

- Community activists are joining together in consumer empowerment campaigns that encourage individuals to stop buying products that have "7290" at the beginning of their bar



**END THE OCCUPATION**  
US CAMPAIGN TO END THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION

The US Campaign is a diverse coalition of over 200 groups working for freedom from occupation and equal rights for all by challenging US policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Campaign is based on human rights and international law, providing a non-sectarian framework for everyone who supports its *Call to Action*. Its strategy is to inform, educate, and mobilize the public so as to change the US role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

code, indicating that they were made in Israel. For more information See [www.settlementproducts.org](http://www.settlementproducts.org) or [www.gushshalom.org](http://www.gushshalom.org).

- Activists are also beginning to target the consumer products of multinational or US companies that support the occupation. For example, groups are focusing on the popular footwear Caterpillar produces—see [bootcat.org/boycott.html](http://bootcat.org/boycott.html).

Depending on the locale and issue, you might want to first try to set up a meeting with your target business to discuss the boycott campaign, provide information on the issues, and explain why you feel it's important to take action. Though the managers might not be swayed by your presentation, you have at least supplied them with information on the products that they are selling to the public. Other tactics: letter writing to corporations and retail chains, gathering signatures on petitions, leafleting outside stores—there is something for everyone!

### Divestment

Universities, churches and municipalities are being asked by students, churchgoers and citizens to divest from corporations, including arms manufacturers, which support and maintain the occupation of Palestine. Divestment activists demand that these institutions block investments in or take money out of such corporations. They use their divestment campaigns to educate their community about Palestine and to build a base for further actions. For information on different types of divestment campaigns see [www.oberlin.edu/~sfp](http://www.oberlin.edu/~sfp), [www.justiceinpalestine.org](http://www.justiceinpalestine.org), [www.pcusa.org](http://www.pcusa.org).

### Civil Disobedience

This can take many forms, including sit-ins or takeovers of the offices of companies that support the occupation and/or of media outlets that do not provide equal coverage of the violence Israel's occupation has on all aspects of Palestinian lives and human rights. This kind of direct action attracts media attention—but it may also result in arrest and only seasoned activists or those who have had some training in civil disobedience should attempt it.

- Queers Undermining Israeli Terror (QUIT) organized a “settler” take-over of a downtown Berkeley Starbucks in 2003, claiming Berkeley as “a city without people for people without a city.” The group erected homes, lawn furniture, and signs reading, “It Works In Palestine, Why Not Here?” and plastic palm trees to “make the concrete bloom.” QUIT selected the coffee shop for the location of its first settlement because Starbucks founder and CEO, Howard Shultz, is a major supporter of the Israeli state and the corporation has become the prime target of an international boycott ([www.inminds.co.uk/boycott-israel.html](http://www.inminds.co.uk/boycott-israel.html)). For other QUIT actions go to [www.quitpalestine.org](http://www.quitpalestine.org).

- In 2002, groups in DC and across the country performed citizens' arrests on CAT corporation executives. Storming the office building that houses the CAT corporate offices, the DC group demanded the immediate arrest of all senior executives. Outside the corporate office, the group stood dressed as Israeli soldiers and announced over bullhorns that individuals on the inside were being arrested for war crimes; they shut down the building and the surrounding area.

To learn more about direct action see [www.nonviolence.org](http://www.nonviolence.org), **The Ruckus Society** at [www.ruckus.org](http://www.ruckus.org), and **Training for Change** at [www.trainingforchange.org](http://www.trainingforchange.org).

## 5 THINGS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE YOU ACT

### 1. Stay Safe

Direct Action can take many forms; no matter what, stay safe and know your rights! It's important to stay in groups and keep track of members. If you plan to participate in civil disobedience be sure that you have allies ready to advocate for you on the outside. For more information on your rights: [www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org), [www.nlg.org](http://www.nlg.org), [www.midnightspecial.net](http://www.midnightspecial.net).

### 2. Be Creative

Grab people's attention and give them something to think about. A creative

message can help more individuals understand what's happening in Palestine. It ropes in the media and the crowds and speaks more loudly to your target. Groups generate many ideas when they brainstorm together—stay creative and soon other activists will be learning from you!

### 3. Be Clear

Make sure your message is clear before you begin your campaign—and that all members of your group understand the message. Designate media contacts and spokespeople to ensure that the media always receives the same message.

### 4. Get the Media

The media is essential to getting the message out especially when it comes to news about Palestine. Don't let bias in the mainstream media keep you quiet! Contact local and national media outlets with a press release and other necessary information. Keep track of which local journalists and columnists write about the Middle East or community activism and build relations over time—they will be more disposed to use your press releases and stories. Better yet, write your own Op Eds and letters to the editor and get them placed in the local media—that way, you won't be misquoted. For more info and resources on working with the media see [www.pmwatch.org](http://www.pmwatch.org).

### 5. Plan and Follow Up

Plan your action carefully: how does it fit into your overall strategy? Have you set achievable goals and identified a couple of indicators that will show if you're on track? Do you know how you will build on the outcome of your action? Avoid disempowering people by engaging them in efforts that don't achieve results. Your action should contribute something to your group's strategy to achieve change—by growing the numbers in your community that support just peace, by impacting the voting record of your elected representatives, by expanding media coverage of the conflict. Remember to celebrate successes along the way! Working together, we will build the kind of national movement that will have enough power to change US policy and secure justice for Palestinians and human rights for all.