

Las Vegas Summit on Campus Anti-BDS Initiative



Haim Saban, Sheldon and Dr. Miriam Adelson, Las Vegas, June 5, 2015

Source: *Israel Hayom*/Boaz Bismuth

In our review of Manfred Gerstenfield's, [The War of a Million Cuts](#) we cited Hollywood Mogul Israeli-American Haim Saban. He suggested that French cell phone company Orange CEO Stephane Richard be fired for anti-Israel boycott statements suggesting dumping a branding license with Israeli cell provider Partner Communications, Ltd. Richard was caught up in a swirl of adverse criticism from Israeli PM Netanyahu and French Foreign Minister Fabius. That forced Richard's reversal of his thoughtless and provocative Israeli boycott remarks at a Cairo, Egypt meeting. Saban had something more at risk than his stake in Orange. He is active in the leadership of the [Israel- America Council](#) (IAC) endeavoring to organize the estimated 500,000 Israelis in the US in a tri-part program of philanthropy, activism and community involvement. The IAC was founded last year and has several regional chapters in Boston, New York, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Florida and New Jersey. Saban, casino mogul Sheldon Adelson and his wife Dr. Miriam Adelson were hosting an anti-BDS Campus Maccabees Summit at one of their flagship properties, The Phoenician, where more than 50 groups gathered on Friday, June 5, 2015.

Saban and Adelson are a political odd couple. Saban is a major Democratic Party contributor who funded the Brookings Institution eponymous-named [Forums](#) at the [Center for Middle](#)

[East Policy](#) in Washington, DC. He is also a proponent of a two-state solution for a peace settlement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority that Adelson opposes. Adelson is a noted GOP campaign financier, who [funds](#) the free Israeli daily, [Israel Hayom](#), that aroused the enmity of the predominately center left competitors. He has close relations with the Netanyahu government to the point that many on the left in Israel and the US consider *Israel Hayom* to be the newspaper of record for Netanyahu's ruling coalition. However, Saban and Adelson are alliance partners in this fight. As Adelson said it was all about "cooperation" in an *Israel Hayom* (IH) [article](#) in response to a question about the odd couple presence at the anti-BDS [Campus Maccabees Summit](#). Cooperation about creating anti-BDS programs that are proactive rather than reactive. The IH [noted](#) these remarks by both Saban and Adelson:

"We might not vote the same in the 2016 presidential election," Saban said, "but when it comes to Israel, Sheldon and I speak the exact same language."

Adelson said, "The fact that he is a Democrat and I'm a Republican has no meaning in this matter. Two or three years ago, I started working with Saban to expand the Israel American Council and I got to know him better. In this story, there is only one thing that stands before us: our love for Israel and the war against the boycott against it. This is not political."

Gerstenfeld, in *The War of Million Cuts*, suggested that Israel should make a commitment of upwards of \$250 million in the fight against delegitimization and demonization of the Jewish State. PM Netanyahu has charged Strategic Affairs Minister Gilad Erdan to develop a plan for combating BDS to be presented for approval by the Cabinet within a few weeks. The program has been given a \$26 million budget allotment.

Israel Hayom [reported](#) the importance that Netanyahu assigned

to this effort in his greetings to the Las Vegas campus anti-BDS summit:

Delegitimization of Israel is a major challenge facing the Jewish people and the Jewish state. Just in the last week, there was an attempt to throw Israel out of FIFA; the National Union of Students in the U.K. voted to support boycotting Israel; and the CEO of a French telecommunications company declared his intention to end the company's business dealings with Israel. His subsequent words of admiration for Israel don't square with his unequivocally hostile remarks in Cairo.

Delegitimization of Israel must be fought, and you are on the front lines. It's not about this or that Israeli policy. It's about our right to exist here as a free people. Our right to defend ourselves.

The Israeli government is committed to launching assertive and innovative programs and to joining you and many others around the world to combat the lies and slander that are leveled against us. Our most potent weapon is the truth. We must speak the truth – loudly, clearly, proudly.

In our June NER [article](#) about how the Jewish Federation of Orange, California (JFOC), suborned student Zionism at the University of California at Irvine. Interviews with leaders of Anteaters for Israel, Sharon Shaoul and alumna Reut Cohen, gave evidence of how JFOC compromised anti-BDS and pro-Israel activism. They also gave voice to the apathetic attitudes of many Jewish students when it came to support for Israel attacked by Islamic anti-Semitic and pro-Palestinian groups on campus. Groups like the Muslim Brotherhood affiliate Muslim Student Union and Students for Justice in Palestine. That was crystallized in the JFOC affiliate, the Rose Project, underwriting trips by Jewish students to Israel and the disputed territories where they “inadvertently” met a

senior Hamas figure. Those [Olive Tree Initiative](#) (OTI) UC-Irvine trip arrangements for such encounters in the disputed territories were made by a leader in the Palestine National BDS Campaign, George Rishmawi. The JF0C's actions at UC-Irvine are an isolated instance. One only has to look at the revelations of Federation funding of Jewish NGOs engaged in support of BDS like those recently disclosed about the UJA-Federation of New York by the Manhattan-based activist group, [JCCWatch.org](#).

Pollster Frank Luntz [presented](#) evidence at the Vegas anti-BDS campus summit drawn from his research on college campuses throughout the US:

He showed that 37% of American Jewish college students have experienced anti-Semitism and only 28% of all American college students believe "America must stand by Israel's side." The trend is even more negative among students who are Democrats, with 53% believing the Palestinians want peace more than the Israelis do.

The situation is better among right-wing voters in America, he explained. The problem, he said, is that liberal Americans view Israel, not the Palestinians, as the problem. "On campuses, we lost the Left and the women," he said, also noting that the word "Zionism" has taken on a negative connotation on college campuses. Instead of "homeland for the Jewish people," the word "Zionism" is now associated with "racism" and "occupation."

Both Gerstenfeld and we believe that a sophisticated "big data" and intelligence gathering program by the Israeli government, coupled with adroit use of social media in cooperation with responsible NGO groups in both Israel and the West should be launched. However, there is one caveat; such an effort is too important to be mired in the typical Israeli bureaucratic quagmire.

