

MEMBER SUBMISSION: A CALL FOR JUSTICE—OUR PROPOSAL TO BOYCOTT ISRAELI PRODUCTS AT THE COOP

May 26, 2026



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By Alyce Barr, Naomi Brussel and Rachel James

The authors are members of PSFC Members for Palestine and presenters of the proposal to boycott Israeli products. Our proposal text is the following:

“Until Israel complies with international law, including by ceasing unlawful discriminatory practices in its treatment of Palestinians, the Coop will not sell goods produced in Israel (pre-1967 borders) or in Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territo-

ry.”

We stand together with over 3,500 Coop members who have signed our petition in support of this boycott. For us personally, as Jews, this act of solidarity ties us to generations of progressive Jewish activism. Never again means never again for anyone!

The Coop is not “just a grocery store.” It is a dynamic and complex social organization. Generations of member-owners have worked to run the store and effect social change, guided and inspired by our Mission Statement, history, and current issues. Our mission mandates that the Coop oppose discrimination, respect the environment, and “seek to avoid products that rely on the exploitation of others.”

Our proposed boycott stands firmly within the Coop’s long and proud tradition of consumer boycotts, in which we joined forces with wider social justice movements. Examples include our boycott of Apartheid South Africa in 1973; a boycott of Pinochet’s dictatorship in Chile that same year; and solidarity with U.S. labor struggles like the United Farm Workers boycott. In 1993, we boycotted Colorado’s products due to its anti-LGBTQ+ laws; we supported strikes at Domino Sugar in 2001; and we voted 59% to boycott Tom Cat Bakery to protect workers from ICE in 2017, though the boycott was blocked by the anti-democratic 75% supermajority requirement for boycotts established the year prior.

Our proposed boycott is a response to the brutal apartheid regime Israel imposes on Palestinians. Similar to the former white supremacist government in South Africa, apartheid Israel uses separation walls, military checkpoints, mass surveillance, home demolitions, and land seizures to dominate Palestinian people. Israeli settlers, with government backing, regularly attack and kill Palestinians to establish settlements illegal under international law.

This long-standing expansionist policy, rooted in ethnic cleansing and dispossession, has escalated into a genocide in Gaza: at least 72,000 confirmed Palestinian deaths from direct attacks, with indirect deaths estimated to be four-times higher due to

mass starvation, destruction of virtually all homes and essential infrastructure and a blockade of humanitarian aid. This is one of the worst mass atrocities of modern times, and the slaughter continues with direct U.S. government support.

The global, nonviolent Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement was initiated by Palestinians in 2005. It calls for economic pressure to compel Israel to comply with international law. The BDS movement is rapidly expanding, with the UK Coop (6.3 million members) voting 73% yes to boycott alongside the Italian Coop Alleanza 3.0 (2.7 million) and Unicoop Firenze (1 million). Locally, our sister Greene Hill Food Coop voted for a boycott in 2024. Also in the city, the NYC public hospital system canceled its \$4 million contract with Palantir, an Israeli military and ICE partner, while the Brooklyn Navy Yard evicted a supplier of drones to the Israeli military and ICE after intense public pressure.

Boycotts are proven, effective nonviolent tools. They were critical in securing victories across the U.S. Civil Rights and labor rights movements and in dismantling South African apartheid. Building on this powerful history, our Coop can send a clear message that Israel must adhere to international law. As Nelson Mandela explained in 1997, “Our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.”

MEMBER-SUBMITTED ARTICLE: EXPANDING THE DIALOGUE AT GENERAL MEETINGS—BUT ONLY ON TUESDAYS?

May 26, 2026



May 5, 2026

By Tim Hospodar

Hybrid meeting formats have enabled a larger fraction of the membership to join General Meetings on Tuesdays. The resulting attendance, however, cannot always speak freely due to time constraints. And members who are conflicted on Tuesday nights are not meaningfully accommodated simply through virtual connectivity. Hybrid solves for some accessibility issues, but it does not tackle the concern of members who have Tuesday conflicts or the compression of discussion that comes with growing participation.

At the February GM, during the agenda discussion about boycotts, someone noted that all members of the Board of Directors had their hands raised at the same time. I'll try not to take it personally, having deferred my allotted minutes during the Board Candidates presentation in favor of the boycott discussion, but the fact remains: The

majority of the Board, if not *all but one member*, did not have a chance to speak. This moment demonstrated the difficulty our meetings face under real time limitations, especially when agenda items generate deep and sincere engagement.

To be clear, this is not a critique of how meetings are chaired. The logistics of the GM have changed and the participant count has changed as well. When historians reference our Coop's earliest days, we recall that town hall-style meetings were proportionately smaller—much smaller—than the in-person attendance we can expect at Prospect Park's Picnic House. I'd also like to positively shout out prior GM discussions (July and October 2025), where members presented ideas around digital tools supporting asynchronous conversation. I am a huge fan of digital knowledge sharing and of those proposals. Still, I believe that approach only provides so much support for membership voice, whereas longer meetings enable greater face time.

What would a singular GM look like if it stretched beyond just one Tuesday night? I am not asking for different topics on different nights. I am suggesting that the Agenda Committee size and weigh agenda items in a way that ensures robust discussion is never truncated. This could mean that a meeting is continued across multiple weeknights. To avoid burdening the Agenda Committee, the necessary size of a meeting could also be informed by registration count. When an agenda item triggers a massive number of registrations (including both on-site and virtual preferences) it follows that a massive discussion should be expected and prepared for.

This is also why rotating or adding weeknights other than Tuesday matters. Again, hybrid addresses some accessibility concerns, but it does not resolve conflicts for members who simply cannot attend on Tuesday evenings. A cooperative meeting reveals consensus only after a diversity of voices are shared, and those voices can only be heard when time allows.

If this resonates with you, I invite members to continue discussion around digital communication tools (knowledge bases, discussion platforms, electronic voting and more), and to begin consideration of a redesigned General Meeting format that en-

ables greater participation—even experimentally.

Tim Hospodar is a member of the Coop's Board of Directors—as such he needs to hear as many voices of the membership as possible.

MEMBER-SUBMITTED ARTICLE: RESTORING SIMPLE MAJORITY FOR BOYCOTTS

May 26, 2026



May 5, 2026

By John Caramichael and Abdi-Hakin Dirie

We are now approaching a long-delayed vote on our proposal to restore simple majori-

ty voting (50%+1) for boycotts.

Currently, boycotts require a 75% supermajority to pass, making them the only Coop decision with special rules. All other decisions, including financial investments, are decided by simple majority. This includes past votes to spend millions to buy our building and contentious decisions on stocking meat and beer and opening a second location. (Note: Bylaws amendments require a 2/3 supermajority, but virtually all decisions on Coop operations, including boycotts, do not amend the bylaws).

From 1973 to 2016, boycotts were also decided by simple majority, including those targeting apartheid South Africa and Chile under Pinochet. The idea of a supermajority requirement only emerged in 2009, just two months after Israel bombed Gaza, killing 1,417 Palestinians, including 313 children. Calls to boycott Israel prompted some members to push for a higher threshold, effectively moving the goalposts.

Further discussion in 2010, 2013 and 2015 brought more attention to the supermajority proposal. Members at the time commented that the policy was “an attempt to rig future votes” and likened it to Republican voter fraud laws meant to influence elections.

The 75% rule was eventually adopted in 2016 through a procedurally flawed vote. (Ironically, it only passed with 60% support and can be repealed by simple majority). The proposal was brought to the floor by a member who is a well-documented supporter of Israel in the *Gazette*, most recently calling for our Coop to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which falsely conflates criticism of Israel with antisemitism.

Like gerrymandering, the 75% threshold erodes democracy by giving disproportionate power to members opposing boycotts. While not explicitly naming Israel, the policy reflects a broader “Palestine Exception,” where advocacy for Palestinians faces institutional barriers.

In our Coop, the Palestine Exception threatens other solidarity work by making all boy-

cotts much harder to pass. In 2017, 59% of members voted to boycott Tom Cat Bakery in Queens, in solidarity with workers seeking severance and basic protections from ICE. Despite majority support, the boycott failed under the 75% rule. The workers ultimately lost their fight, and our Coop shares responsibility.

In our time of rising fascism, war, genocide and exploitation, boycotts remain an essential tool of nonviolent resistance. Restoring simple majority voting will renew our tradition of solidarity by removing a recently established barrier.

To address two common criticisms: First, some argue boycotts are “divisive” and require special rules. But our Coop has made many big decisions using simple majority. Disagreement is part of democracy. Manipulating the rules to advantage one side does not reduce disagreement; it merely undermines faith in the process. As seen with last year’s vote on hybrid General Meetings (in that case, needlessly requiring a bylaws amendment), applying special rules to block a popular policy created greater frustration.

Second, some claim supermajority reflects Coop “tradition,” referring to our past voting record on boycotts. It is true that past boycott votes often had high percentage levels of support, but the actual requirement was a simple majority until 2016.

Consider an analogy: the Coop’s city council district votes overwhelmingly blue each cycle. Should we require Democrats to win 75% to be elected because of that “tradition”? Such a rule would clearly be unfair. High percentage votes are welcome, but requiring a supermajority is different, because it grants unequal power to opponents of boycotts and distorts the democratic process.

More broadly, these criticisms omit how and why the rule was introduced: in reaction to a proposed boycott of Israel. The seemingly neutral rhetoric belies the reality of a Palestine Exception.

Restoring simple majority voting is a step toward a more democratic and accessible

Coop, in the spirit of reforms like hybrid meetings. Thank you for your consideration, and we hope to earn your “yes” vote at an upcoming General Meeting.

MEMBER-SUBMITTED ARTICLE: ANALYSIS OF RISKS FOR YOUR COOP—THE ISRAEL BOYCOTT

May 26, 2026



April 14, 2026

By Joe Holtz

The boycott vote could happen shortly. Please sign-up to attend the GM online.

International Cooperative Principle #1:

“Voluntary and Open Membership: Cooperatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.”

Analysis: Our Coop was able to hold together during boycotts of South Africa, Chile etc. because all had about 100% support. But the boycott of Israel has thousands of members/owners on each side. The middle ground is: each member/owner makes their own shopping decisions. Banning Israeli products will be perceived as discrimination per International Coop Principle #1. Many members will give up their Coop membership because a policy for the entire organization that they object to will speak for them if they remain member/owners. Many future would-be members will never join. Many members enjoy our Coop’s diversity—interacting with members from a wide variety of races, ethnicities, religions and sexual orientations. Political tolerance and diversity is difficult. Embracing all types of diversity is what coops worldwide have found to be what is needed for Cooperative success. Our Coop is an amazing place but we shouldn’t be overconfident about our ability to maintain the number of members we need to stay financially viable.

Excerpt from our Mission Statement:

“We are committed to diversity and equality. We oppose discrimination in any form. We strive to make the Coop welcoming and accessible to all and to respect the opinions, needs and concerns of every member.”

Analysis: This excerpt from our Mission Statement is our Coop’s version of International Principle #1.

Respecting the wisdom of the International Principles of Cooperation and our Mission Statement will hopefully give members pause, regardless of their views on Israel/-Palestine, before supporting a Coop boycott that is sure to divide us. If you must vote for a boycott, please respect the super-majority and vote to keep that. It is the Cooperative thing to do. The 75% supermajority aligns more with our historical support for

boycotts.

The damage that will come our way from outside if we boycott Israel is significant. The Heritage Foundation's "Project Esther" is a roadmap for the Trump administration's plan to attack groups/organizations that are anti-Israel and/or pro-Palestine. (follow this link then click on "Read Full Report"). We will be perceived as a group that should be attacked. The Project Esther report call-to-action includes attacking groups via "Critical vulnerabilities exploited".

Analysis: We're in the world's media capital. The administration in Washington has great attention to retribution (Columbia, Harvard etc.) and follows the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 in many instances. We should expect to be attacked by the administration's bureaucracy if we boycott Israel. Our Coop isn't just regulated by NY State or NYC. National agencies regulate us. We should be terrified of possible consequences and worried about our ability to exist. We should not take our little Coop's existence for granted. We will be a target.

Joe Holtz is the former General Manager, and Co-founder, of the Park Slope Food Coop.