

# Stop South African Coal Exports to Genocidal, Apartheid Israel!



**The case for the South African government to respect Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) and Hague Group mandates against Glencore/ARM exports and all other fuel supplies to Israel**

**(prepared by Patrick Bond, University of Johannesburg Centre for Social Change)**

## International BDS mandate ignored: Pretoria's "[Hague Shmague](#)"?



- Protesters at Richards Bay Coal Terminal on [September 24, 2025](#); at the SA trade ministry's offices in Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town on [August 21, 2025](#); at Glencore's Johannesburg office on [August 22, 2024](#) and [May 28, 2025](#), and at African Rainbow Minerals on [April 5, 2025](#), demanded: ***no more coal for Israel!***
- In late 2023, the SA government appealed to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to prosecute Israel for its Gaza genocide. On the West Bank, the ICJ [ruled](#) (in July 2024) that **states must halt "*aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by Israel's illegal presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.*"**
- Then in September 2024, the United Nations General Assembly [voted](#) (124 for, 14 against) for states to **"prevent trade or investment relations that assist in the maintenance of the illegal situation" in the OPT.**
- The Hague Group of countries was co-founded by South Africa to defend the International Criminal Court, pledging on [January 31 2025](#) to **"prevent the docking of vessels at any port... where there is a clear risk of the vessel being used to carry military fuel and weaponry to Israel,"** and on [July 16](#), to halt **"provision or transfer of arms, munitions, military fuel, related military equipment, and dual-use items to Israel..."**
- After extraction from mines, SA coal is [supplied](#) to the Israel Electric Corporation to generate electricity used in the genocide and for maintaining apartheid; this coal can certainly be considered military fuel.
- These commitments logically entail ending SA state aid and assistance to the illegal occupation and genocide. Most important is parastatal Transnet's coal rail shipments and Richards Bay port facilitation associated with depletion of coal, a state-owned natural resource. But, defending the rail and port *status quo*, Transport Minister Barbara Creecy won't even reply to [Boycott Divestment Sanctions](#) BDS letters.
- The BDS strategy called for by the broadest-ever range of Palestinian civil society in 2005 peacefully addresses one of Israel's major vulnerabilities: fossil-energy supply. **Coal-fired power plants at Ashdod and Hadera ports in 2023 provided 17.5% of power to a grid** that supplies the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), weapons and ammunition manufacture. The coal also fuels Israel's illegal West Bank settlements.
- **Colombian President Gustavo Petro proclaimed in June 2024 that he would "suspend coal exports to Israel until the genocide is stopped,"** because it is *"an energy supply and strategic resource for the manufacturing of weapons, the mobilization of troops, and the manufacturing of supplies for military operations"* – a stance [repeated](#) in August 2024 and July 2025 (when Petro [explained](#) how 'white' state officials had so far sabotaged his efforts), leading to a decisive [prohibition](#) on 28 August 2025 (Decree 949).
- In 2021, UN data [showed](#) 6.5 million tonnes of coal were sold to Israel, of which 50% came from Colombia, 36% from Russia, 13% from South Africa and 1% from Turkiye. (In May 2024 and August 2025, Turkiye imposed full trade sanctions on Israel, but dishonest [shippers reroute](#) goods.) In 2023 Israel [consumed](#) 5.2 million tonnes. SPGlobal [reported](#) in June 2024, "Israel imported 1.4 million tonnes of thermal coal... Colombia accounted for 855,700 tonnes – or 60% of all imports during this period. Other key suppliers included Russia with 247,500, South Africa at 169,200, the U.S. at 86,100 and China supplying 53,000."
- Ignoring these developments, in Parliament on September 26 2024, SA trade minister Parks Tau [replied](#) to a small party (Al Jama-ah) regarding "mounting calls from social justice activists to stop trading coal with Israel." Defending coal supplies to the genocidaires, Tau insisted: ***"Sanctions applied by one member against another in the absence of multilateral sanctions by the United Nations, would violate the World Trade Organisation principle of non-discrimination and would open the country to legal challenge."***
- Tau's specious argument – ignoring widespread violations of WTO anti-tariff provisions by many governments, especially the U.S. – means he refuses to [regulate a dangerous export](#), a tool [commonly used by other trade ministers](#). The combustion of coal is the [main cause of the climate crisis](#), as well as of local mines' deadly [local pollution](#) and degradation of land, air and water; it is certainly dangerous!
- On August 21, hundreds of protesters [visited Tau's offices](#) in Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town to make these points. But Tau failed to provide any response.



## Glencore/ARM's long historic role in fueling Israeli oppression

- Since the genocide began, 18 ships have left Richards Bay carrying coal to Israel, fueling both genocide and the climate crisis, making SA the second leading supplier to Israel since 2023, and the current leader.
- As the world's largest commodity trader, Switzerland-based Glencore offers no apologies or rationale for fueling Israeli genocide and apartheid. In May 2024, at Glencore's [Annual General Meeting](#) in Switzerland, a shareholder asked "if you're conducting human rights assessments on the use of the coal you're exporting to Israel to ensure that you're not held liable"? Board Chairman Kalidas Madhavpeddi replied, "The company supplies to many countries around the world and it's almost impossible to tell you the answer to your question." The shareholder followed up, "So you don't check how the coal is being used?" Madhavpeddi replied: "Coal is used in power generation, that's simple."
- The two Johannesburg-born South African Glencore directors at the AGM – CEO Gary Nagle and Senior Independent Director Gill Marcus – were [notably silent](#) during the questioning. Nagle was formerly in charge of Glencore's coal operations. Marcus was once Nelson Mandela's spokesperson, then was Deputy Finance Minister, chair of ABSA Bank and Governor of the SA Reserve Bank. Having served Glencore since 2018, she is the firm's [highest-ranking non-executive director](#).
- Glencore acquired South African-based Xstrata in 2013 and inherited local partner Patrice Motsepe's African Rainbow Minerals Coal (ARM Coal). In 2006, ARM Coal had been set up by the Xstrata mining house with a \$135 million loan to Motsepe, along with nearly half the black-owned firm's investment capital. The deal was a major reason Motsepe vaulted to SA's richest black businessman. Xstrata [bragged](#) of its 13 million tonnes of coal exports in 2006: "Outside of Europe, Israel was the largest purchaser of the South African operations' coal production."
- Motsepe is brother-in-law to SA president Cyril Ramaphosa. To become deputy president in 2014, Ramaphosa was forced to sell his own Glencore-allied firm, Shanduka; he had also chaired the Glencore-owned Optimum mine. That transaction was [completed](#) only in mid-2015, but as head of Eskom's 'war room' in 2014-15, Ramaphosa tripled the price paid for Glencore's Optimum coal.
- With coal priced at [\\$92/tonne](#) in mid-2025, Glencore takes net profits of \$25 for each tonne sold, due to [\\$70/tonne production costs](#). Each tonne burned creates 2.6 tonnes of CO2 emissions. So these ships fuel both Israel's genocide and the climate crisis. At a '[Social Cost of Carbon](#)' of \$1500/tonne, a ship that carries 170 000 tonnes does \$663 million in damage. But Glencore's profits are only \$4.3 million.
- At a [protest](#) on April 5 2025 at ARM's Sandton hq, Motsepe's spokesperson Imrhan Paruk claimed it is "not involved in the marketing or sales of the coal." Yet ARM's 2024 Annual Report [admits](#) a joint venture with Glencore is "governed by a management committee controlled by ARM Coal." At the export shipping docks, ARM has "Access to Glencore SA's interest and entitlement in the Richards Bay Coal Terminal."
- Since its 1994 renaming from 'Marc Rich & Co,' Glencore has had a [terrible reputation in Africa](#). Initial earnings had included apartheid-era sanctions busting. Its Congolese [dealings](#) with Israeli tycoon Dan Gertler continued until the latter's 2018 blacklisting by the U.S. government. From 2018-22, Glencore was [prosecuted under the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act](#) for widespread bribery and corruption across Africa, and paid [\\$1.5 billion in fines](#). (Suspiciously, it has not been subject to prosecution in SA though the Zondo Commission received complaints from the [SA Federation of Trade Unions](#) and an [ex-Eskom CEO](#).)



- **SA coal companies** targeted by BDS include Glencore (the main firm selling coal from Colombia) and its main mining partner, Motsepe's ARM, as well as parastatal **Transnet which runs the railroad and ports, and 13 Richards Bay Coal Terminal (RBCT) owners:** Anglo Operations, ARM Coal, South32 Coal, Exxaro, Glencore Operations, Kangra, Sasol Mining, South Dunes Coal Terminal, SA Coal Mine Holdings, Tumelo Coal Mines, Umcebo Mining, Optimum Coal and Koorfontein. All now profit from SA coal sales to Israel.
- Before costs, these coal export **revenues fluctuated with price and quantity: \$101 mn in 2021; \$184 mn in 2022; \$78 mn in 2023; and \$72 mn in 2024.** But the full costs of coal exports – in terms of local pollution, [greenhouse gas damage](#) and depleted hydrocarbons, as well as wages, operating costs and environmental remediation – are far higher than gross income. BDS activists insist that **any worker or community adversely affected by halting coal exports to Israel by Glencore** and other coal mines, must get **compensation from the \$12.8 billion in the Presidency's 'Just Energy Transition Partnership' pot.**
- Could BDS help end the genocide and other IDF attacks? **A similar vulnerability occurred within SA's own apartheid system** in September 1985: [financial sanctions](#) caused such a squeeze that President PW Botha declared a debt default, imposed exchange controls and shut the stock market. Business leaders' furious response included an urgent visit to Zambia to **meet exiled African National Congress leaders.** Whites fearful of further meltdown accepted 'one person, one vote' democracy in 1994. Because anti-apartheid sanctions had split white business away from the racist government, it had the **most powerful, external, non-violent impact on ending this crime against humanity.** (And U.S.-based [General Motors](#) even paid reparations for earnings in apartheid SA, **as should Glencore-ARM for profits from Israeli-bound coal.**)
- The **Palestine Youth Movement** argued in a June 2025 [critique](#) of Pretoria, **"In addition to supporting settlement and military infrastructure, this energy supply also powers Israel's complex artificial intelligence systems** used to surveil and track the activities of all Palestinians in Gaza... **Cutting South African coal supplies would have a tangible impact on Israel's ability to sustain its war on Gaza – a measure that aligns with South Africa's duty to employ all available means to prevent genocide."**
- **Anti-coal protests by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign-South Africa will continue,** aimed at coal capitalists as well as these facilitators: **President Cyril Ramaphosa, Ministers Parks Tau (Trade), Barbara Creecy (Transport), Gwede Mantashe (Minerals and Petroleum), Kgosisentsho Ramokgopa (Energy), Dion George (Environment), Enoch Godongwana (Finance) and Ronald Lamola (International Relations).**
- The next ship, [Seafighter](#), is expected to carry more than 170 000 tonnes of coal – for use in fueling genocide, mass starvation and ethnic cleansing of Palestine – departing RBCT in mid-October.

*20 ships, 2.2 mn tonnes, since the genocide began:*



Vessel Name	Richards Bay	Destination	Tonnes	Ship Owner
<a href="#">Seafighter</a>	14/10/2025	Israel	170 000	Thenamaris
<a href="#">Navios Felix</a>	28/09/2025	Israel	170 000	Glory Ocean
<a href="#">Algoma Value</a>	21/07/2025	Ashkelon	75 569	CSL Americas
<a href="#">CSL Metis</a>	20/06/2025	Ashkelon	69 304	CSL Americas
<a href="#">Fortune</a>	14/05/2025	Hadera	182 620	Eastern Med.
<a href="#">Algoma Value</a>	18/05/2025	Ashkelon	75 569	CSL Americas
<a href="#">CSL Metis</a>	03/04/2025	Ashkelon	69 304	CSL Americas
<a href="#">Algoma Value</a>	28/02/2025	Ashkelon	75 569	CSL Americas
<a href="#">Schinoussa</a>	11/03/2025	Hadera	176 247	Minerva Dry
<a href="#">Cape Friendship</a>	06/01/2025	Hadera	185 879	Fml Ship Mgt
<a href="#">Parea</a>	16/11/2024	Israel	181 000	Diana Shipping
<a href="#">Seamelody</a>	09/11/2024	Israel	82 031	Thenamaris
<a href="#">Seastrength</a>	17/10/2024	Hadera	81 134	Thenamaris
<a href="#">Seabulk</a>	18/10/2024	Hadera	81 996	Thenamaris
<a href="#">Zea</a>	03/10/2024	Hadera	81 434	Eastern Med.
<a href="#">Sea Commander</a>	16/09/2024	Hadera	81 856	Eastern Med.
<a href="#">Navios Felix</a>	11/08/2024	Hadera	181 221	Navios
<a href="#">KSL Seattle</a>	20/01/2024	Hadera	181 015	Golden Ocean
<a href="#">KSL Salvador</a>	04/12/2023	Hadera	180 958	Golden Ocean
<a href="#">Golden Cumulus</a>	25/10/2023	Hadera	180 499	Golden Ocean