

Obama 'Injects Doubts' into U.S. Relationship with Israel: Rick Perry

Texas Gov. Rick Perry is taking on Barack Obama over disputed Israeli settlements. Last week, President Obama signed trade legislation last week that contains a provision against the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. But the Obama administration says it will not apply this provision to the West Bank and Gaza, which Israel has controlled since 1967 and have provoked hot international debate ever since. Foes of Israeli expansion – often led by churches, such as the liberal United Church of Christ (UCC) – seek to end private investment in Israeli settlements, or in Israel proper. Activists liken Israeli policies to apartheid and see themselves as the successors to the movement that divested from South Africa in the 1980s. Ultimately, economic pressure toppled the white-led Nationalist Party government in Pretoria under F.W. de Klerk and ushered in the rule of the African National Congress (ANC). The State Department took aim at part of the anti-BDS provision in a statement last Tuesday. “By conflating Israel and ‘Israeli-controlled territories,’ a provision of the Trade Promotion Authority legislation runs counter to longstanding U.S. policy towards the occupied territories, including with regard to settlement activity,” State Department Spokesman John Kirby said. (The State Department has discouraged Israeli settlements in the territories since the George H.W. Bush administration more than 20 years ago.) That statement didn’t sit well with Rick Perry. “The State Department’s comments on anti-BDS legislation signed into law by President Obama this week inject doubt into the United States’ commitments both to stopping the BDS movement and to negotiating a sustainable peace between Israel and Palestine,” Gov. Perry said. “The BDS movement singles out Israel,” he said, adding that it is

“common sense that supporting boycotts against Israeli exports does not bring Israel and Palestine one step closer to peace.” “If the administration is serious about achieving that sustainable peace, it should not vacillate in its objection to BDS,” Gov. Perry said. Instead, he said the United States “should uncompromisingly oppose all forms of BDS, because that is the only way to stop the movement.” “The signals that the administration sends to the Europeans are critical here, and this time the State Department’s signal was ambiguous at best,” Perry said. “Only with robust diplomacy and tough enforcement, will the message be received.”