

# Petition Against Divestment at Stanford University

Dear Associated Students of Stanford University and Stanford Board of Trustees,

As Stanford students, faculty, alumni, and community members, we call upon the ASSU and the Board of Trustees to reject any calls for Stanford University to divest from certain companies because of their relationship with Israel.

We believe that the resolution of highly complex geopolitical issues, such as the tragic Israeli-Palestinian conflict, requires the development of thoughtful and constructive approaches that respect the dignity and rights of both peoples. The calls for divestment satisfy none of these criteria. Instead, the calls for divestments ask Stanford to take highly divisive action by condemning Israel, and Israel alone, for the current state of affairs.

Our concerns are heightened because the calls for university divestment are a priority of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. The BDS movement does not aim toward a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that recognizes the legitimate national aspirations of both peoples. The majority of the leadership of the BDS Movement does not support Israel's right to exist, and sees all of Israel as "Occupied Palestine."

Similarly, when groups such as Stanford Out of Occupied Palestine rail against Israel's recent operations in Gaza against Hamas, they omit the thousands of rockets Hamas fired at Israeli civilians, the Hamas charter that explicitly rejects "peace initiatives" and Hamas' continued statements that its goal is to destroy Israel. There is also no effort to ask the University to address grotesque human rights violations by other countries. The University should not minimize the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to a "right"/"wrong" judgment, nor cherry-pick allegations against one country while ignoring so many other incidents in which human rights violations are indisputable.

The question of how to guarantee the rights of both the Israeli and Palestinian people is a formidable challenge. What is clear, though, is that placing all blame for the conflict on Israel alone is to adopt a highly partisan viewpoint pressed by advocacy groups with a larger objective of delegitimizing Israel.

Furthermore, we strenuously object to the petition's attempt to falsely link our country's serious issues of race relations, police violence and incarceration rates with an international conflict over land and national narratives. This is a cynical effort to hijack important civil rights issues to further a narrow political agenda.

It is also critical to recognize the painfully divisive impact any such action would have within the Stanford community. The University's imperative is to create a welcoming environment that encourages debate of all sorts. We strongly support the free exchange of ideas, including views that

are critical of Israel. However, prior divestment campaigns at Stanford have engendered hostility for communities of Stanford students and faculty that have challenged that very environment of civil and open discourse. Further, the BDS movement's calls for academic and cultural boycotts of Israel are antithetical to Stanford's cherished academic values of thoughtful discourse and academic freedom, and the deep belief that the best way to effect change is to engage, educate and work creatively toward just solutions.

Accordingly, we urge unequivocal rejection of the divestment petition.

**\* Required**

**Full name \***

**Email address \***

**Affiliation with Stanford University \***

Current student

Faculty or staff

Alumnus

Community member

Other:

**Graduation year (if applicable)**

For example: 2015

**Degree and major (if applicable)**

For example: B.S., Computer Science

**Comments (optional)**

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