

APRIL 14, 2015

Statement of the Stanford Board of Trustees on divestment

For the last several months, Stanford has been evaluating a request submitted by Stanford Students for Justice in Palestine that it divest its endowment holdings of certain companies that do business in Israel. The Board concluded that the university's mission and its responsibility to support and encourage diverse opinions would be compromised by endorsing an institutional position on either side of an issue as complex as the Israel-Palestine conflict. Therefore the Board will not be taking action on this request, nor will it consider this request further.

In coming to this decision, the Board has observed the campus discussion surrounding the issue and received input from the Advisory Panel on Investment Responsibility and Licensing (APIRL). In its deliberations, the Board reflected on the fact that the Stanford community is diverse, with many groups and individuals – faculty, staff, students and alumni – highly engaged on all sides of this issue and other important issues of our time. A diversity of viewpoints and Stanford's commitment to open, thoughtful and civil debate are critical to the educational mission of the university.

The request from the Stanford Students for Justice in Palestine asserted that Stanford should divest its holdings in certain companies that they claim profit from human rights abuses and violations of international law in Israel/Palestine. Neither the APIRL nor the Board sought to determine the veracity of those claims, or to disprove them.

Rather than explore such issues, the Board focused on the questions of divisiveness and negative impact on its mission as contained in the Statement on Investment Responsibility. The Statement provides that if the Trustees conclude that a specific Trustee action “is likely to impair the capacity of the University to carry out its educational mission (for example, by causing significant adverse action on the part of governmental or other external agencies or groups, or by causing deep divisions within the University community), then the Trustees need not take such action.” The Board concluded that any action on this issue would clearly have such an impact.



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