

UC Berkeley students pass Israel divestment bill

Non-binding resolution calls for university to halt relations with companies that participate in Israel's 'illegal occupation and ensuing human rights abuses'

BY GAVRIEL FISKE | April 18, 2013, 11:56 pm |

After a marathon 10-hour debate, the Students Union at the University of California Berkeley passed a resolution early Thursday morning calling for the entire University of California system to divest from companies that work with Israel's military.

The non-binding resolution by student body-elected senators passed 11-9 and asked the UC system, which was called a "complicit third party" in Israel's "illegal occupation and ensuing human rights abuses" in the bill, to divest from some \$14 million in investments in Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard and Cement Roadstone Holdings, [according to student newspaper the Daily Californian](#).

The passing of the resolution at 5:30 a.m. elicited "cheering, stomping and cries of joy" from supporters. Pulitzer Prize-winning author Alice Walker, a Berkeley resident and strong critic of Israel, was present for the debate.

Sadia Saifuddin, who co-sponsored of the bill, said during the debate that she didn't want "one cent of my money to go toward fueling the occupation of my brothers and sisters."

Opponents of the resolution, which an opposing senator called a document which "frames Israel as the sole aggressor" in the conflict, had proposed a counter bill that would "seek investment opportunities that strengthen Israeli-Palestinian cooperation in pursuit of a two state resolution to the conflict" instead of divestment, but that bill was shelved during the overnight debate.

Opponents described to the Daily Californian how a previous divestment resolution, which was passed in 2010 by the Student Union but later vetoed by the UC Berkeley president, created a "hostile campus climate" for Jewish students.

"Divestment does nothing to better the lives of Palestinians. It seeks to undermine, harm and destroy, and offers no vision of an Israeli-Palestinian future," said Ron Hassner, a political science professor.

Similar resolutions have been passed at the University of California campuses in Irvine and San Diego. The University of California, Riverside's student government passed a BDS — Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions — resolution last month that was overturned on April 3. Opponents

argued that they were not given enough time to prepare for the vote. BDS measures also were rejected in the last two months at UC-Santa Barbara and Stanford University.

JTA contributed to this report.



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