

For Immediate Release
March 7th, 2016

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VASSAR STUDENT ASSOCIATION PASSES BDS RESOLUTION DESPITE ADMINISTRATIVE THREATS AND OFF-CAMPUS PRESSURE

On Sunday, March 6th, the Vassar Student Association (VSA) voted to endorse the Palestinian-led international [Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions \(BDS\) movement](#) in support of Palestinian rights and an end to Israeli human rights abuses. The [BDS Resolution](#), which calls for the VSA's political statement of support of the BDS movement, passed by a vote of 15 in favor and 7 opposed. The organization did not pass the concurrently submitted [BDS Bylaw Amendment](#), which would have prevented VSA funds from being spent on products listed on the resolution because of their ties to human rights abuses. The amendment needed a 2/3 majority but failed by a vote of 12 in favor to 10 opposed.

Following a visit from the Vassar Board of Trustees last week, senior level administrators [told the VSA](#) that if it passed the BDS Bylaw Amendment, the Administration would assume control over the VSA's \$900,000 activities budget. Such an act would have altered the structure of the VSA fundamentally and starkly diminished student powers of government. The threats from the Board of Trustees and senior level administrators are a coercive tactic and represent a clear betrayal of the principle of shared governance between students and administrators central to the VSA and the functioning of the College more broadly.

While we express our disappointment at the decision to not adopt the amendment, we also acknowledge and appreciate the deliberation that the VSA undertook to come to its decision. Moreover, we are deeply grateful for the letters of support signed by [38 faculty members](#) and [over 150 alumnae/i](#) respectively. The letters signify broad-based support within the Vassar community for students' right to informed and efficacious government and the BDS Resolution more specifically. [Attorneys have also raised concerns](#) regarding the suppression of our speech and the interference of trustees in the student democratic process.

Despite the administration's threats and enormous push-back from off-campus groups, the VSA Council voted to endorse the movement for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions. This is an important step in the right direction. However, so long as our institution remains financially invested in human rights abuses, we will continue our work. Vassar College has a lot to be held accountable to, and we seek to align our work as best as possible with all students working to hold the College accountable to the values of dignity and justice for all people.

The Vassar BDS Resolution and Bylaw Amendment can be found here:
<http://vsa.vassar.edu/orgs/vassarsjp/bds-resolution/>