

Jewish Letters of Support for UC Berkeley Divest Bill

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Rabbi Brant Rosen:

One of Newsweek's top 25 U.S pulpit rabbis

[Why I Support the Berkeley Student Divestment Resolution](#)

I'm sure many of you have been following the huge communal dust up that has been brewing in reaction to [a resolution recently passed by the Associated Students of UC Berkeley](#). Known as SB118, it calls for the ASUC to divest its holdings in General Electric and United Technologies because of "their military support of the occupation of the Palestinian territories."

The bill further resolves:

(That) the ASUC will further examine its assets and UC assets for funds being invested in companies that a) provide military support for or weaponry to support the occupation of the Palestinian territories or b) facilitate the building or maintenance of the illegal wall or the demolition of Palestinian homes, or c) facilitate the building, maintenance, or economic development of illegal Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian territories (and)

(That) if it is found that ASUC and/or the UC funds are being invested in any of the abovementioned ways, the ASUC will divest, and will advocate that the UC divests, all stocks, securities, or other obligations from such sources with the goal of maintaining the divestment, in the case of said companies, until they cease such practices. Moreover, the ASUC will not make further investments, and will advocate that the UC not make further investments, in any companies materially supporting or profiting from Israel's occupation in the above mentioned ways.

On March 18, after eight hours of dialogue and deliberation, the resolution passed by a vote of 16-4. After a barrage of criticism from Jewish community and Israel advocacy groups, the resolution was vetoed by the President of the ASUC on March 24. As things currently stand, the veto can be overridden by 14 votes. The final decision will be made on Wednesday April 14 at 7:00 pm (PST).

The most prominent Jewish statement of condemnation against the resolution came in the form of [a letter co-signed by a wide consortium of Jewish organizations](#) (including J Street, the ADL and The David Project) that called the bill "anti-Israel," "dishonest" and "misleading." Supporters of the resolution have mobilized as well: Jewish Voice for Peace recently responded to the consortium's letter [with a strong public statement](#) and other prominent public figures, including [Archbishop Desmond Tutu](#) and [Naomi Klein](#) have voiced their support of the Berkeley resolution.

[As I've written in the past](#), I do believe that the longer Israel's intolerable occupation continues, the more we will inevitably hear an increase in calls for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS). I'm certainly mindful of what these kinds of calls mean to us in the Jewish community – and I know all too well how the issue of boycott pushes our deepest Jewish fear-buttons in so many ways. Despite these fears, however, I personally support the ASUC resolution.

While I understand the painful resonance that boycotts historically have had for the Jewish community, I truly believe this bill was composed and presented in good faith – and I am troubled that so many Jewish community organizations have responded in knee-jerk fashion, without even attempting to address to the actual content of the resolution.

It is also unfair and untrue to say that this resolution is “anti-Israel.” The bill makes it clear that it is condemning a crushing and illegal occupation – and not Israel as a nation. The wording of the resolution leaves no doubt that its purpose is to divest from specific companies that aid and abet the occupation – and not to “demonize” Israel itself. If a group of students oppose the occupation as unjust, then why should we be threatened if they ask their own organization to divest funds that directly support it? This is not demonization – this is simply ethically responsible investment policy.

Why, many critics ask, are the Berkeley students singling out Israel when there are so many other worse human rights abusers around the world? To answer this, I think we need to look at the origins of the BDS movement itself. This campaign was not hatched by the Berkeley students, or even by international human rights activists. It was founded in 2005 by a wide coalition of groups from Palestinian civil society who sought to resist the occupation through nonviolent direct action.

In other words, BDS is a liberation campaign waged by the Palestinian people themselves – one for which they are seeking international support. By submitting this divestment resolution, the Berkeley students were not seeking to single out Israel as the world's worst human rights offender – they are responding to a call from Palestinians to support their struggle against very real oppression.

The JVP statement (see above) makes this point very powerfully:

Choosing to do something about Israel's human rights violations does not require turning a blind eye to other injustices in the world as these groups suggest; but refusing to take action because of other examples would indeed turn a blind eye to this one. Now is the time to support Palestinian freedom and human rights. Berkeley students have done the right thing. Others should follow suit and divest from the occupation, as part of their general commitment to ethical investment policies.

I believe that the actions of these Berkeley students represent an important challenge to those of us who believe that Israel's occupation equals oppression. Quite simply, we cannot stay silent forever. Sooner or later we will have to ask ourselves: when will we be willing to name this for what it really and truly is? When will we find the wherewithal to say out loud that this policy of home demolitions, checkpoints, evictions, increased Jewish settlements, and land expropriations is inhumane and indefensible? At the very least, will we be ready to put our money where our moral conscience is?

I know that this debate is enormously painful. And I respect that there are members of the Jewish community who disagree with this campaign. But I must say I am truly dismayed when I witness the organized Jewish community responding to initiatives such as these by simply crying “anti-Semitism.” For better or worse, we are going to have to find a better way to have these conversations. Because whatever happens with the ASUC resolution tomorrow, we haven’t heard the end of this movement by a longshot.

This summer, in fact, the Presbyterian Church General Assembly will be taking up a number of resolutions related to Israel/Palestine, including one that recommends divestment from Caterpillar because the company knowingly supplies Israel with bulldozers that are used for illegal (and deadly) home demolitions in the West Bank and Gaza. I’m sad to see that the organized Jewish community is already gearing up for another major confrontation...

**Richard Falk: Albert G. Milbank Professor of International Law & Practice
Emeritus, Princeton**

Special Rapporteur for Occupied Palestinian Territories, UN Human Rights Council

April 13, 2010

To the Senate of the Associated Students of the University of California, Berkeley (ASUC):

I am writing to encourage renewed support for Senate Bill 118A ("A Bill in Support of ASUC Divestment from War Crimes"), including the override of ASUC President Will Smelko's veto on March 24, 2010. The earlier passage of the bill by a 16-4 vote in the Senate has been widely hailed as a major step forward in the growing global campaign of divestment and boycott as a means of holding Israeli accountable for flagrant and persistent patterns of violating fundamental rules of international criminal law, as well as those portions of international humanitarian law applicable to military occupation. We have reached a stage in world history where citizens of conscience have a crucial role to play in the implementation of a global rule of law, and this initiative by Berkeley students, if implemented, will be both a memorable instance of global citizenship and an inspiration to others in this country and throughout the world.

I would agree that recourse to divestment and boycott tactics should be reserved for exceptional and appropriate circumstances. Such initiatives by their very nature deliberately interfere with the freedom of the global marketplace and the normally desirable free interplay of cultures, nations, persons, and ideas. There are several reasons why the circumstances of prolonged Israeli criminality resulting in acute suffering for several million Palestinians living under occupation since 1967 present such a strong case for reliance on the tactics of divestment and boycott.

First of all, it has become painfully clear that neither the United Nations, the United States, the actions of other governments, nor world public opinion are willing or able to persuade or pressure Israel to terminate policies that are both violations of Geneva Convention IV, governing occupation, and international criminal law, relating to both war crimes and crimes against humanity. At the same time, there is reason to believe that efforts by Palestinians to wage what might be called the Legitimacy War, are having a strong impact on Israel and elsewhere. It should be remembered that many of the conflicts of the last 75 years have been resolved by reliance on soft power superiority, which has more than compensated for hard power inferiority. In this respect the anti-apartheid movement, waged on a symbolic global battlefield, created a political climate that achieved victory in the legitimacy war that was translated, nonviolently, into a totally unexpected political outcome—the peaceful transformation of South Africa into a multi-racial constitutional democracy. The Palestinian solidarity movement has become the successor to the anti-apartheid movement as the primary legitimacy war of this historical moment. Berkeley's participation by way of this divestment initiative thus takes account of the failure of governments and the international community to protect Palestinian victims of ongoing criminality, but also joins in a movement of solidarity that contains some hope of an eventual peaceful and just resolution of the underlying conflict allowing both peoples to resume a secure and normal life.

Secondly, we in the United States face a special challenge as our tax dollars, economic and military assistance, and unconditionally supportive diplomacy have shielded Israel from mechanisms of accountability for criminal behavior. Most recently, the U.S. Government repudiated the Goldstone Report, a highly respected fact-finding mission conducted under UN auspices, that had carried out a scrupulously fair and comprehensive investigation of allegations of war crimes attributable to Israel and Hamas during the Israeli offensive in Gaza that started on December 27, 2008, and lasted for 22 days. The Goldstone Report's main findings confirmed earlier respected investigations, concluding that the evidence supported overall allegations of criminal tactics, including intentional efforts to target in Gaza civilians and the civilian infrastructure in flagrant violation of the provisions of the law of war, which should have been particularly upheld in a situation of such one-sided military operations conducted against an essentially defenseless Gaza, an unprecedented situation in which the entire civilian population of 1.5 million were locked into the combat zone, and denied even the option to become refugees.

It should be also noted that the people of Gaza have been subjected to an unlawful Israeli blockade that has for more than 32 months limited the entry of food, medicine, and fuel to subsistence levels, with widely reported drastic harm to physical and mental health of the entire population. There are two related points here: the allegations of criminality are abundantly documented, including by a range of respected human rights organization in Israel and occupied Palestine; and the U.S. Government has done its best to ensure the continuation of Israeli impunity and it has been complicit as arms supplier and as a country deferential to the blockade despite its gross and clear violation of the prohibition against collective punishment contained in Article 33 of Geneva IV. In this respect, as Americans we have an extra duty beyond that of those living elsewhere to support the global divestment campaign, thereby showing that our government does not speak for the whole society when it comes to the application of the rule of law to Israel and its political leadership.

Thirdly, by targeting General Electric and United Technologies for divestment, the Senate shows that it is not acting arbitrarily or punitively, but seeking to take action against corporations that are supplying precisely the weaponry used by Israel to impose its unlawful will on occupied Palestinian territories. Israel in legally dubious ways has relied on Apache and Sikorsky Helicopters and F-16 fighter bombers to mount periodic attacks against a variety of Palestinian targets, thereby abandoning its primary duty as an occupying power to protect the civilian population of an occupied territory.

Although most emphasis on criminality has been placed on Israeli policies toward the Gaza Strip, it is also relevant to note that Israeli policies on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem have consistently ignored the obligations imposed on an occupying power by Geneva IV, and have done so in a manner that has consistently undermined hopes for peace. Israel has continued to build and expand settlements, unlawful by Article 49(6) of Geneva IV prohibiting transfers of population of the occupying power to an occupied territory; the scale of these unlawful settlements, with some 121 settlements established on the West Bank alone and over 200,000 Israel settlers now living in East Jerusalem, has produced an aggregate settler population of about 450,000. Such a massive violation of international humanitarian law is serious on its own, but also creates a situation on the ground that has greatly diminished prospects for a viable Palestinian state or for the sort of withdrawal from occupied Palestine that had been unanimously decreed by the UN Security Council in its famous Resolution 242 way back in 1967.

A final expression of Israeli lawlessness can be noted in its continued construction of a separation wall on occupied Palestine land despite a 14-1 judgment by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that the wall was unlawful, should be dismantled, and Palestinians compensated for the harm done. It is notable that the ICJ is a diverse and respected international institution that rarely reaches such a level of unanimity on controversial issues. Unfortunately, less notable is the fact that the sole dissenting judge was the American judge, and that the U.S. rejected the judicial authority of the ICJ in relation to the wall without even bothering to refute its legal reasoning. Although the judgment was in the form of an 'Advisory Opinion' it represented a detailed and authoritative assessment of applicable international law that was endorsed by an overwhelming vote of the UN General Assembly. Consistent with its attitude toward international law, Israel immediately expressed its unwillingness to abide by this ICJ ruling, and has continued to build segments of the wall, using excessive force to quell nonviolent weekly demonstrations by Palestinians, Israelis, and international activists at construction sites. To give perspective, if the Soviet Union had constructed the Berlin Wall in such a way as to encroach on West Berlin by even a yard, it would have almost certainly have caused the outbreak of World War III.

I hope that I have demonstrated that divestment is justified in light of these realities. Israel has consistently defied international law. The United States Government has been unrelenting in reinforcing this defiance, and is a major facilitator through its overall diplomatic, economic, and military support. The international community, via the UN or otherwise, has been unable to induce Israel to respect international humanitarian law and international criminal law. With such a background, and in light of an increasingly robust worldwide movement supportive of divestment, it seems both symbolically and substantively appropriate for Berkeley to divest from corporations supplying weaponry used in conjunction with Israeli criminality. Such a decision taken at the behest of students at one of the world's leading universities would send a message around the world that needs to be heard, not only in Israel but in this country as well. It also shows that when our government cynically refuses to uphold the most fundamental norms of international law there is an opportunity and responsibility for citizens to do so. I salute the members of the Senate (and their supporters in the Berkeley community) who vote to override this ill-considered veto of Senate Bill 118A.

Sincerely,

Richard Falk

Albert G. Milbank Professor of International Law & Practice Emeritus, Princeton University

(since 2002) Visiting and Research Professor, Global Studies, UCSB

Special Rapporteur for Occupied Palestinian Territories, UN Human Rights Council

Noam Chomsky: MIT Linguist, writer, activist

April 13, 2010

I would like to express my support and appreciation for the principled statement of the ASUC Senate calling for divestment from US corporations providing military technology for Israel to use in the occupied territories and in its past and possibly future invasions of Lebanon. Amnesty International has gone further, calling for a full arms embargo during Israel's murderous attack on Gaza in January 2009, with pretexts that do not withstand a moment's scrutiny, one of the most egregious of recent US-backed Israeli crimes.

There can be no question about the right, in fact responsibility, of students to express their concerns about official actions of their university, and to call on university authorities to refrain from improper actions -- in this case, indirect participation in ongoing crimes. The statement appropriately focuses on our own responsibilities: on our own actions -- or inaction -- and their consequences. That much is hardly more than moral truism. In the present case, the decision goes beyond moral truism: the US plays a decisive role in implementing illegal Israeli takeover of occupied territories, harsh repression, violence and aggression. It is our responsibility to do what we can to act ourselves, and to mobilize others, to change the US government policies that foster serious crimes and bar the path to peaceful diplomatic settlement. Terminating support for US corporations that participate in US-backed Israeli crimes is a significant step towards this end, both in its policy and educational implications.

Noam Chomsky

Jewish Letters of Support for UC Berkeley Divest Bill

Judith Butler: UC Berkeley, Maxine Elliot Professor in the Departments of Rhetoric and Comparative Literature

You Will Not Be Alone

Let us begin with the assumption that it is very hard to hear the debate under consideration here. One hears someone saying something, and one fears that they are saying another thing. It is hard to trust words, or indeed to know what words actually mean. So that is a sign that there is a certain fear in the room, and also, a certain suspicion about the intentions that speakers have and a fear about the implications of both words and deeds. Of course, tonight you do not need a lecture on rhetoric from me, but perhaps, if you have a moment, it might be possible to pause and to consider reflectively what is actually at stake in this vote, and what is not. Let me introduce myself first as a Jewish faculty member here at Berkeley, on the advisory board of Jewish Voice for Peace, on the US executive committee of Faculty for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, a global organization, a member of the Russell Tribunal on Human Rights in Palestine, and a board member of the Freedom Theatre in Jenin. I am at work on a book which considers Jewish criticisms of state violence, Jewish views of co-habitation, and the importance of 'remembrance' in both Jewish and Palestinian philosophic and poetic traditions.

The first thing I want to say is that there is hardly a Jewish dinner table left in this country--or indeed in Europe and much of Israel--in which there is not enormous disagreement about the status of the occupation, Israeli military aggression and the future of Zionism, binationalism and citizenship in the lands called Israel and Palestine. There is no one Jewish voice, and in recent years, there are increasing differences among us, as is evident by the multiplication of Jewish groups that oppose the occupation and which actively criticize and oppose Israeli military policy and aggression. In the US and Israel alone these groups include: Jewish Voice for Peace, American Jews for a Just Peace, Jews Against the Occupation, Boycott from Within, New Profile, Anarchists Against the Wall, Women in Black, Who Profits?, Btselem, Zochrot, Black Laundry, Jews for a Free Palestine (Bay Area), No Time to Celebrate and more. The emergence of J Street was an important effort to establish an alternative voice to AIPAC, and though J street has opposed the bill you have before you, the younger generation of that very organization has actively contested the politics of its leadership. So even there you have splits, division and disagreement.

So if someone says that it offends "the Jews" to oppose the occupation, then you have to consider how many Jews are already against the occupation, and whether you want to be with them or against them. If someone says that "Jews" have one voice on this matter, you might consider whether there is something wrong with imagining Jews as a single force, with one view, undivided. It is not true. The sponsors of Monday evening's round table at Hillel made sure not to include voices with which they disagree. And even now, as demonstrations in Israel increase in number and volume against the illegal seizure of Palestinian lands, we see a burgeoning coalition of those who seek to oppose unjust military rule, the illegal confiscation of lands, and who hold to the norms of international law even when nations refuse to honor those norms.

What I learned as a Jewish kid in my synagogue--which was no bastion of radicalism--was that it was imperative to speak out against social injustice. I was told to have the courage to speak out, and to speak strongly, even when people accuse you of breaking with the common understanding, even when they threaten to censor you or punish you. The worst injustice, I learned, was to remain silent in the face of criminal injustice. And this tradition of Jewish social ethics was crucial to the fights against Nazism, fascism and every form of discrimination, and it became especially important in the fight to establish the rights of refugees after the Second World War. Of course, there are no strict analogies between the Second World War and the contemporary situation, and there are no strict analogies between South Africa and Israel, but there are general frameworks for thinking about co-habitation, the right to live free of external military aggression, the rights of refugees, and these form the basis of many international laws that Jews and non-Jews have sought to embrace in order to live in a more just world, one that is more just not just for one nation or for another, but for all populations, regardless of nationality and citizenship. If some of us hope that Israel will comply with international law, it is precisely so that one people can live among other peoples in peace and in freedom. It does not de-legitimize Israel to ask for its compliance with international law. Indeed, compliance with international law is the best way to gain legitimacy, respect and an enduring place among the peoples of the world.

Of course, we could argue on what political forms Israel and Palestine must take in order for international law to be honored. But that is not the question that is before you this evening. We have lots of time to consider that question, and I invite you to join me to do that in a clear-minded way in the future. But consider this closely: the bill you have before you does not ask that you take a view on Israel. I know that it certainly seems like it does, since the discussion has been all about that. But it actually makes two points that are crucial to consider. The first is simply this: there are two companies that not only are invested in the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands and peoples, but who profit from that occupation, and which are sustained in part by funds invested by the University of California. They are General Electric and United Technologies. They produce aircraft designed to bomb and kill, and they have bombed and killed civilians, as has been amply demonstrated by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. You are being asked to divest funds from these two companies. You are NOT being asked to divest funds from every company that does business with Israel. And you are not being asked to resolve to divest funds from Israeli business or citizens on the basis of their citizenship or national belonging. You are being asked

only to call for a divestment from specific companies that make military weapons that kill civilians. That is the bottom line.

If the newspapers or others seek to make inflammatory remarks and to say that this is an attack on Israel, or an attack on Jews, or an upsurge of anti-Semitism, or an act that displays insensitivity toward the feelings of some of our students, then there is really only one answer that you can provide, as I see it. Do we let ourselves be intimidated into not standing up for what is right? It is simply unethical for UC to invest in such companies when they profit from the killing of civilians under conditions of a sustained military occupation that is manifestly illegal according to international law. The killing of civilians is a war crime. By voting yes, you say that you do not want the funds of this university to be invested in war crimes, and that you hold to this principle regardless of who commits the war crime or against whom it is committed.

Of course, you should clearly ask whether you would apply the same standards to any other occupation or destructive military situation where war crimes occur. And I note that the bill before you is committed to developing a policy that would divest from all companies engaged in war crimes. In this way, it contains within it both a universal claim and a universalizing trajectory. It recommends explicitly "additional divestment policies to keep university investments out of companies aiding war crimes throughout the world, such as those taking place in Morocco, the Congo, and other places as determined by the resolutions of the United Nations and other leading human rights organizations." Israel is not singled out. It is, if anything, the occupation that is singled out, and there are many Israelis who would tell you that Israel must be separated from its illegal occupation. This is clearly why the divestment call is selective: it does not call for divestment from any and every Israeli company; on the contrary, it calls for divestment from two corporations where the links to war crimes are well-documented.

Let this then be a precedent for a more robust policy of ethical investment that would be applied to any company in which UC invests. This is the beginning of a sequence, one that both sides to this dispute clearly want. Israel is not to be singled out as a nation to be boycotted--and let us note that Israel itself is not boycotted by this resolution. But neither is Israel's occupation to be held exempt from international standards. If you want to say that the historical understanding of Israel's genesis gives it an exceptional standing in the world, then you disagree with those early Zionist thinkers, Martin Buber and Judah Magnes among them, who thought that Israel must not only live in equality with other nations, but must also exemplify principles of equality and social justice in its actions and policies. There is nothing about the history of Israel or of the Jewish people that sanctions war crimes or asks us to suspend our judgment about war crimes in this instance. We can argue about the occupation at length, but I am not sure we can ever find a justification on the basis of international law for the deprivation of millions of people of their right to self-determination and their lack of protection against police and military harassment and destructiveness. But again, we can have that discussion, and we do not have to conclude it here in order to understand the specific choice that we face. You don't have to give a final view on the occupation in order to agree that investing in companies that commit war crimes is absolutely

wrong, and that in saying this, you join Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Christians and so many other peoples from diverse religious and secular traditions who believe that international governance, justice and peace demand compliance with international law and human rights and the opposition to war crimes. You say that you do not want our money going into bombs and helicopters and military materiel that destroys civilian life. You do not want it in this context, and you do not want it in any context.

Part of me wants to joke--where would international human rights be without the Jews! We helped to make those rights, at Nuremberg and again in Jerusalem, so what does it mean that there are those who tell you that it is insensitive to Jewishness to come out in favor of international law and human rights? It is a lie--and what a monstrous view of what it means to be Jewish. It disgraces the profound traditions of social justice that have emerged from the struggle against fascism and the struggles against racism; it effaces the tradition of *ta-yush*, living together, the ethical relation to the non-Jew which is the substance of Jewish ethics, and it effaces the value that is given to life no matter the religion or race of those who live. You do not need to establish that the struggle against this occupation is the same as the historical struggle against apartheid to know that each struggle has its dignity and its absolute value, and that oppression in its myriad forms do not have to be absolutely identical to be equally wrong. For the record, the occupation and apartheid constitute two different versions of settler colonialism, but we do not need a full understanding of this convergence and divergence to settle the question before us today. Nothing in the bill before you depends on the seamless character of that analogy. In voting for this resolution, you stand with progressive Jews everywhere and with broad principles of social justice, which means, that you stand with those who wish to stand not just with their own kind but with all of humanity, and who do this, in part, both because of the religious and non-religious values they follow.

Lastly, let me say this. You may feel fear in voting for this resolution. I was frightened coming here this evening. You may fear that you will seem anti-Semitic, that you cannot handle the appearance of being insensitive to Israel's needs for self-defense, insensitive to the history of Jewish suffering. Perhaps it is best to remember the words of Primo Levi who survived a brutal internment at Auschwitz when he had the courage to oppose the Israeli bombings of southern Lebanon in the early 1980s. He openly criticized Menachem Begin, who directed the bombing of civilian centers, and he received letters asking him whether he cared at all about the spilling of Jewish blood. He wrote:

I reply that the blood spilled pains me just as much as the blood spilled by all other human beings. But there are still harrowing letters. And I am tormented by them, because I know that Israel was founded by people like me, only less fortunate than me. Men with a number from Auschwitz tattooed on their arms, with no home nor homeland, escaping from the horrors of the Second World War who found in Israel a home and a homeland. I know all this. But I also know that this is Begin's favourite defence. And I deny any validity to this defence.

As the Israeli historian Idith Zertal makes clear, do not use this most atrocious historical suffering to legitimate military destructiveness--it is a cruel and twisted use of the history of suffering to defend the affliction of suffering on others.

To struggle against fear in the name of social justice is part of a long and venerable Jewish tradition; it is non-nationalist, that is true, and it is committed not just to my freedom, but to all of our freedoms. So let us remember that there is no one Jew, not even one Israel, and that those who say that there are seek to intimidate or contain your powers of criticism. By voting for this resolution, you are entering a debate that is already underway, that is crucial for the materialization of justice, one which involves having the courage to speak out against injustice, something I learned as a young person, but something we each have to learn time and again. I understand that it is not easy to speak out in this way. But if you struggle against voicelessness to speak out for what is right, then you are in the middle of that struggle against oppression and for freedom, a struggle that knows that there is no freedom for one until there is freedom for all. There are those who will surely accuse you of hatred, but perhaps those accusations are the enactment of hatred. The point is not to enter that cycle of threat and fear and hatred--that is the hellish cycle of war itself. The point is to leave the discourse of war and to affirm what is right. You will not be alone. You will be speaking in unison with others, and you will, actually, be making a step toward the realization of peace--the principles of non-violence and co-habitation that alone can serve as the foundation of peace. You will have the support of a growing and dynamic movement, inter-generational and global, by speaking against the military destruction of innocent lives and against the corporate profit that depends on that destruction. You will stand with us, and we will most surely stand with you.

About Judith Butler

Judith Butler is currently a Rockefeller Fellow at the Center for Human Values at Princeton. She is the author of several books on feminist theory, continental philosophy and contemporary politics.

Jewish Letters of Support for UC Berkeley Divest Bill

Israeli supporters of Palestinian boycott, divestment and sanctions movement, including Ofra Ben Artzi, sister-in-law of Israeli Prime Minister

April 5, 2010

Dear Friends at UC Berkeley SJP,

Two weeks ago news of the vote to divest UC Berkeley from companies that provide military support for the Israeli occupation has reached us here in Israel. Like many who have been working hard to liberate Palestine and restore justice to Palestinians, we were very happy to hear of your decision.

We witness the extent to which Israeli society becomes increasingly radicalized and indifferent to the systematic brutality it employs against Palestinians. As it does, the prospects for an internal change in Israeli society are almost nil. The efforts of friends like you stand the best chance to exert the necessary pressure to secure the full rights of Palestinians.

There is enough evidence today which allows one to safely state that the only pressure Israelis are sensitive to these days is that put forth by BDS activities. Boycott, sanctions and divestment from Israel and from companies invested in Israel are perceived by Israelis as questioning the legitimacy of Israeli policies and Israeli society. This indeed seems to be a cost Israelis are not willing to pay.

For example, in October 2009, [Aluf Benn](http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1116923.html), Haaretz correspondent testifies: "Only one thing does bother the Israelis, according to the polls: fear of a diplomatic embargo and an international boycott. The Goldstone Report and the International Court of Justice in The Hague are arousing concern and interest, far more than Obama's peace speeches. However, as long as relations with the rest of the world are satisfactory, Israelis see no reason to emerge from indifference and listen to the president of the United States."

(<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1116923.html>).

A month later, mainstream journalist, [Sever Plocker](http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3798761,00.html), admits that "Israel's image has hit a nadir; it is isolated, unwanted, and perceived as bad. The world is telling us that should we continue along the same contemptible path, we will lose our legitimacy."

(<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3798761,00.html>)

Along the same lines, [Yoav Karny who writes in Globes](http://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?QUID=1056,U1259349558910&did=10005174) estimates: "Israel will not continue to exist if the educated middle class of the West turns against it. The experience of South Africa has taught all the boycotters in the world that there isn't a more effective tool to weaken a society's stamina than the withdrawal of foreign investments".

(<http://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?QUID=1056,U1259349558910&did=10005174>)

67). (For more information on the impact of BDS activities on Israel and Israelis, see <http://boycottisrael.info/content/milestones-history-israeli-bds-movement-brief-chronology>).

We believe that actions such as yours will make Israelis face the fact that the people of the world will not be silent when human rights are crushed. We therefore applaud your efforts and thank you for them. They are not only the best hope for Palestinians but also for Israelis.

In solidarity,

Ronnie Barkan
Ronnen Ben-Arie
Ofra Ben Artzi
Adi Dagan
Shiri Eisner
Prof. Rachel Giora
Yoana Gonen (Coalition of Women for Peace)
Prof. Lev Luis Grinberg
Chaya Hurwitz
Peretz Kidron
Yana Knopova
Yael Lerer
Eytan Lerner
Yossef Lubovsky
Ya'acov Manor
Eilat Maoz (Coalition of Women for Peace)
Dr. Anat Matar
Rela Mazali
Inna Michaeli (Coalition of Women for Peace)
Dr. Dorothy Naor
Ofar Neiman
Dr. David Nir
Jonathan Pollak
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Jewish Letters of Support for UC Berkeley Divest Bill

Naomi Klein: Journalist and syndicated columnist **Open Letter to Berkeley Students on their Historic Israeli Divestment Bill**

On March 18, continuing a long tradition of pioneering human rights campaigns, the Senate of the Associated Students of the University of California, Berkeley (ASUC) passed "A Bill In Support of UC DIVESTMENT FROM WAR CRIMES." The [historic bill](#) resolves to divest ASUC's assets from two American companies, General Electric and United Technologies, that are "materially and militarily supporting the Israeli government's occupation of the Palestinian territories"-and to advocate that the UC, with about \$135 million invested in companies that profit from Israel's illegal actions in the Occupied Territories, follow suit.

Although the bill passed by a vote of 16-4 after a packed and intense debate, the President of the Senate [vetoed](#) the bill six days later. The Senate is expected to reconsider the bill soon; groups such as Jewish Voice for Peace are asking supporters of the bill to [send letters](#) to the Senators, who can overturn the veto with only 14 votes.

Here is the letter I just sent:

Dear members of the ASUC Senate,

I am writing to urge you to reaffirm Senate Bill 118A, despite the recent presidential veto.

It comes as no surprise that you are under intense pressure to reverse your historic and democratic decision to divest from two companies that profit from Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory. When a school with a deserved reputation for academic excellence and moral leadership takes such a bold position, it threatens to inspire others to take their own stands.

Indeed, Berkeley--the campus and the wider community--has provided this kind of leadership on many key issues in the past: not only Apartheid in South Africa but also sweatshops in Indonesia, dictatorship in Burma, political killings in Nigeria, and the list goes on. Time and again, when the call for international solidarity has come from people denied a political voice, Berkeley has been among the first to answer. And in virtually every case, what began as a small action in a progressive community quickly spread across the country and around the world.

Your recent divestment bill opposing Israeli war crimes stands to have this same kind of global impact, helping to build a grassroots, non-violent movement to end Israel's violations of international law. And this is precisely what your opponents--by spreading deliberate lies about your actions--are desperately trying to prevent. They are even going so far as to claim that, in the future, there should be no divestment campaigns that target a specific country, a move that would rob activists of one of the most effective tools in the non-violent arsenal. Please don't give into this pressure; too much is on the line.

As the world has just witnessed with the Netanyahu government's refusal to stop its illegal settlement expansion, political pressure is simply not enough to wrench Israel off its current disastrous path. And when our governments fail to apply sanctions for defiant illegality, other forms of pressure must come into play, including targeting those corporations that are profiting directly from human rights abuses.

Whenever we take a political action, we open ourselves up to accusations of hypocrisy and double standards, since the truth is that we can never do enough in the face of pervasive global injustice. Yet to argue that taking a clear stand against Israeli war crimes is somehow to "discriminate unfairly" against Israelis and Jews (as the veto seems to claim) is to grossly pervert the language of human rights. Far from "singling out Israel," with Senate Bill 118A, you are acting within Berkeley's commendable and inspiring tradition.

I understand that there is some debate about whether or not your divestment bill was adopted "in haste." Not having been there, I cannot comment on your process, though I am deeply impressed by the careful research that went into the decision. I also know that in 2005 an extraordinarily broad range of Palestinian civil society groups called on activists around the world to adopt precisely these kinds of peaceful pressure tactics. In the years since that call, we have all watched as Israeli abuses have escalated dramatically: the attack on Lebanon in the summer of 2006, a massive expansion of illegal settlements and walls, an ongoing siege on Gaza that violates all prohibitions on collective punishment, and, worst of all, the 2008/9 attack on Gaza that left approximately 1,400 dead.

I would humbly suggest that when it comes to acting to end Israeli war crimes, the international response has not suffered from too much haste but from far too little. This is a moment of great urgency, and the world is watching.

Be brave.

Yours sincerely,

Naomi Klein

Naomi Klein is an award-winning journalist and syndicated columnist and the author of the international and New York Times bestseller [The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism](#), now out in paperback. Her earlier books include the international best-seller, [No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies](#) (which has just been re-published in a special [10th Anniversary Edition](#)); and the collection [Fences and Windows: Dispatches from the Front Lines of the Globalization Debate](#) (2002). To read all her latest writing visit www.naomiklein.org

Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb: One of first woman rabbis in the United States
Advisory board member of Jewish Voice for Peace
Cofounder of Shomer Shalom Network for Jewish Nonviolence

April 8, 2010

Dear friends:

I am writing in support of the ASUC Senate's bill calling for divestment of ASUC assets from General Electric and United Technologies "because of their military support of the occupation of Palestinian territories."

I have been involved in Palestinian and Israeli conflict transformation work for the past 40 years during which time I have witnessed various formulations of the peace process come and go including Madrid and Oslo, Camp David, the Beirut Summit, the Road Map, the Saudi Peace Plan, the Geneva Accord, the Peace Valley Plan, and various cease fires, summits and declarations.

I have also been an eye witness to victims of horrific violence on both sides. The loss of even one life is a matter of profound mourning for every family. May everyone who has lost a love one be in our prayers.

In light of the incontrovertible evidence of the Goldstone Report, the break down of the latest effort at 'talks', the siege of Gaza, the ongoing appropriation of West Bank land and the forced removal of Palestinians from East Jerusalem which can be considered 'ethnic cleansing', I believe we have arrived at a new place in the struggle for a possible two-state solution. I believe, for all of us who still hold out hope in a future that embraces the full humanity of two peoples sharing the land, the time has come to initiate a global movement for boycott and divestment of all institutions and corporations which profit from violence of illegal occupation of Palestinian people and lands.

Profiting from the fruits of violence is not kosher.

Lest we forget, the government of Israel is sustaining a policy of forced displacement, humanitarian blockade, air strikes and use of deadly weapons on civilian populations, torture, beating and sexual humiliation, arbitrary arrest and administrative detention of minors and adults, water and land theft, Jewish only roads, hundreds of military checkpoints, security fences, nightly incursions, human shields, collaborators, deportation, permit systems, denial of access to economic opportunity, health care, culture and education, military targeting of sewage and electricity plants and water installations, uprooting of tens of thousands of trees and the destruction of thousands of homes.

How can we conduct business as usual in the face of the overwhelming abuse of human rights?

Only a universal standard for human rights can ensure long lasting security for people trapped in zones of conflict. Boycott and divestment support a universal human rights stan-

dard and are a concrete action that we, as citizens concerned with the future of families and children in Palestine and Israel can adopt.

It takes tremendous courage to take such a stance. Thank you.

You are standing in partnership with Jews, Muslims, Christians, Israelis and Palestinians and others around the world who are working for a nonviolent solution that affirms the dignity, security and well-being of everyone residing in Israel and Palestine. Only through such a global and sustained partnership will we cultivate a truly viable movement that makes support for the occupation so distasteful to those who profit from it, that Israel will be forced to end the occupation and negotiate a just and mutually agreed upon peace.

L'shalom,
Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb
Advisory board member of Jewish Voice for Peace
Cofounder of Shomer Shalom Network for Jewish Nonviolence

8 Israeli Peace Groups in Support of UC Berkeley Divest Bill

April 12, 2010

Dear Members of UC Berkeley's ASUC:

We, Israeli organizations, comprised of Jewish and Palestinian women and men, dedicated to building a just peace, promoting human and civil rights in Israel/Palestine, join the call made to the UC Berkeley Senate to overturn the veto of Senate Bill 118A and to stop investing in the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory.

It has come to our attention that the UC Berkeley student Senate voted 16 to 4 to divest from two American companies, General Electric and United Technologies, whose activities materially and militarily support and maintain the Israeli occupation, in violation of international human rights and humanitarian law. We understand that the vote also advises divestment of ASUC and UC assets from companies that a) provide military support for the occupation of the Palestinian territories, b) facilitate the building or maintenance of the illegal apartheid wall or the demolition of Palestinian homes, or c) facilitate the building, maintenance, or economic development of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

We see UC's investments in these corporations as contradictory to UC Berkeley's commitment to international law, and the university community's long standing commitment to peace, justice and democracy.

As Jewish and Palestinian Israelis, we know better than most the long standing injustices of the occupation. On a daily basis we confront human rights abuses committed by the Israeli government such as land theft, blockades on civilian food supplies, systematic arrests and indefinite detentions of nonviolent demonstrators, and targeted destruction of Palestinian farm land and homes. Far from serving to protect Israelis, these actions serve the interests of an Israeli extremist agenda which dehumanizes Palestinians, fuels rampant racism, and jeopardizes the safety of both Palestinians and Israeli citizens.

Further, as Israelis, we reject the unsubstantiated argument that divestment delegitimizes Israel. We believe that the opposite is the case. Just as various civil rights movements served to strengthen and improve American society, our human rights groups are an integral part of the movement here which seeks to strengthen Israel/Palestine by making it a place for all of its citizens. Apartheid in South Africa and the Jim Crow laws in the United States did not end because of silence. They ended because thousands, including students like you, took action to say NO. Like South Africa and the United States, we need citizens around the world to stand up and say NO to occupation, apartheid and oppression.

We recognize that members of the US Congress are far behind most US citizens who recognize that Israel's illegal behaviors fuel anti-Israeli, anti-Jewish and anti-American hatred throughout the world. That is why, for the good of Israel, for the good of the United States,

outside pressure from principled people, including students is needed to reverse the 43 year policy of illegal occupation. Israel is unlike other countries that violate international law--, the US government does not hold Israel accountable for its illegal actions, making efforts like divestment necessary in encouraging corporate actors to do the right thing and in communicating to our political leadership that young people are disenchanted with US support for Israel's occupation.

We therefore urge ASUC to overturn the presidential veto and to remove all corporations that support and maintain the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories from its investment portfolio. Do it for a better Palestinian future. Do it for a better Israeli future.

Coalition of Women for Peace
<http://coalitionofwomen.org/home/english>

Shministim
<http://december18th.org/>

Yesh Gvul
http://www.yeshgvul.org.il/index_e.asp

Hithabrut - Tarabut
<http://www.tarabut.info/he/home/>

Union of Progressive Women
(Affiliated with the National Progressive Assembly party - Tajamoa)
<http://www.tajamoa.org/?mod=arch&ID=38>

The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD).
<http://icahd.org/eng/>

New Profile - Movement for the Civilization of Israeli Society
<http://www.newprofile.org/english/>

BOYCOTT Supporting the Palestinian BDS Call from Within (Israeli)
<http://www.boycottisrael.info/>

Jewish Letters of Support for UC Berkeley Divest Bill

Gush Shalom: One of Israel's best known peace groups

Tel-Aviv - April 10, 2010

Dear Members of UC Berkeley's ASUC,

We, hereby join the call to stop "investing in the occupation".

It has come to our attention that the UC Berkeley student Senate voted 16 to 4 to divest from two American companies, General Electric and United Technologies, because of their activities helping to maintain Israeli military rule in the territories occupied since 1967. We see this as a vote for Israeli-Palestinian peace, for the upholding of human rights and a stricter implementation of international law and thus as fitting with a university community committed to peace, justice and democracy.

As longtime Israeli peace activists, we know the injustices of the occupation and we have confronted them for decades. We did that out of solidarity with the occupied Palestinians but also out of enlightened self-interest. The future of Israel and its citizens is not served by land robbery and oppressing another people. As long as Palestinians are oppressed and don't have their own state, the future of the state of Israel is at risk; there is no viable alternative to peace with the neighbors and integration in the region.

We therefore urge ASUC to overturn the presidential veto - for a better future for Israelis, Palestinians and the entire world.

On behalf of Gush Shalom,

Adam Keller

pob 3322, Tel-Aviv 61033

+972-3-5565804

adam@gush-shalom.org

Jeff Halper, Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions

April 11, 2010

Dear ASUC Members,

As the head of an Israeli peace and human rights organization, The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), I would like to add our voice to those who have urged you to overrule the veto of the Senate President and reaffirm the decision to divest in companies profiting from the Israeli Occupation.

ICAHD, like many other Israeli and Jewish organizations in the US and other countries, endorses the call of Palestinian civil society to divest from companies profiting from the Occupation – and especially those like General Electric, United Technologies, Motorola, Boeing, Lockheed Martin and Caterpillar who are so heavily invested in the Israeli military. After more than four decades of diplomatic and grassroots efforts aimed at inducing Israel to end its Occupation while watching it grow ever stronger, more permanent and increasingly violent and repressive, we believe the time is overdue for people the world over to tell Israel in no uncertain terms that it cannot be expected to be a part of the international community as long as it violates human rights, international law and dozens of UN resolutions with impunity.

And what we know as Israelis actively struggling alongside Palestinians “on the ground” in the Occupied Territories is that Israeli actions are motivated not by security concerns but by a pro-active intention of expanding into the West Bank and East Jerusalem in order to claim that land as its own and thereby foreclose the establishment of a viable, truly sovereign Palestinian state. The demolition of more than 24,000 Palestinian homes in the Occupied Territories since 1967, the expropriation of more than half the land of the West Bank, the building of 150 settlements housing a half-million Israelis, the uprooting of almost two million olive and fruit trees, the devastation of the Palestinian economy and the immiseration of its people and the construction of a wall twice as high as the Berlin Wall through Palestinian communities – all this, together with the bloodshed, cannot be explained by “security.” As Bishop Tutu and others in South Africa who have visited the Occupied Territories – including the Jewish Minister Ronni Kasrils – will testify, Israel is constructing an apartheid regime that in many ways is more oppressive than was the South African regime.

Now as then, governments were moved to action only when civil society raised its voice. Berkeley has always been one of the strongest and principled of those voices, and has often spurred the rest of us into action. Your reaffirmation of the decision to divest in GE and UT will once again lead the way.

In appreciation and solidarity,

Jeff Halper
ICAHD Director

Two Page Advertisement: 263 Jews in support of UC Berkeley Divestment Measure

THIS IS A PAID POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT

We Are Jews and We Support the Divestment Bill

We are Jews and we support the ASUC's call for UC divestment from companies that enable Israel's occupation of Palestinian land, Israel's demolition of Palestinian homes, Israel's illegal settlements, or Israel's illegal wall.

We are Jews and we support the ASUC in taking a firm stand for justice, just as the ASUC acted against South Africa's apartheid, Sudan's genocide, and the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Governments that commit war crimes and human rights violations must be resisted.

We are Jews and we yearn for a future in which Israelis and Palestinians can live in peace and safety, with dignity and human rights for all, when Palestinians will be free from oppression, and when Israelis will be free from being ordered to assume a uniform to enforce that oppression.

We are Jews and we are part of the majority (55%) of U.S. Jews who oppose Israel's building and expansion of illegal settlements in occupied East Jerusalem and the Palestinian territories.^[1] What's more, 63% of Israeli Jews support an end to the occupation of the Palestinian territories as part of a peace agreement.^[2]

Please do not be dissuaded by the misleading arguments of some of our Jewish brothers and sisters intended to weaken your resolve. Passing the divestment bill will benefit Jews and Israelis, and support those in Israel who are building a movement for justice and equity.

This is an historic moment in which the ASUC can contribute to our dreams for our children -- Jewish, Muslim, and Christian alike. Stand firm on the values and principles that motivated your original vote.

We are Jews and we ask the ASUC Senate to override the veto without changing or watering down the bill.

Signed,*

Daniel Boyarin
UC Berkeley Taubman Professor
of Talmudic Culture

Chana Kronfeld
UC Berkeley Professor of Hebrew
and Jewish Studies
Israeli

Michael N. Nagler, Ph.D.
Founder, UC Berkeley Peace and
Conflict Studies Program
Founder, Metta Center for
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UC Berkeley Ph.D. Student,
Sociology
Israeli, Co-Author of
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JD 1987, Ph.D. 1990

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Psychiatry

Medea Benjamin
Co-Founder, Global Exchange
Parent of UC Graduate

Hedy Epstein
85-year-old Survivor
of the Nazi Holocaust

Maia Ettinger
Daughter of Holocaust Survivors

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Peace, Conflict, and Coexistence
Studies,
Brandeis University

Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb
Founder, Shomer Shalom
Institute for Jewish Nonviolence
Advisory Board Member,
Jewish Voice for Peace

Vered Kraus
Professor of Sociology and
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University of Haifa, Israel

Sydney Levy
Director of Campaigns,
Jewish Voice for Peace

Hannah Mermelstein
Co-Founder,
Birthright Unplugged

Dorothy Naor
Founding Member of New Profile,
The Movement for Civil-ization of
Israeli Society
Herzliah, Israel

Rabbi Brian Walt
Taanit Tzedek - Jewish Fast for
Gaza

Yuval Yonay
Professor of Sociology and
Anthropology
University of Haifa, Israel

* Signatories' organizations are listed for identification purposes only and do not indicate organizational endorsements.

^[1] Poll conducted in March 2010 by J Street.

^[2] Poll conducted in January 2010 by the S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace.

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Jewish Voice for Peace: Leading American Jewish organization that supports full equality for Israelis and Palestinians

Congratulates the UC Berkeley Senate for their first historic divestment vote- before it was vetoed by the Senate president

(March 19, 2010) Jewish Voice for Peace congratulates the UC Berkeley student Senate for the historic vote to divest from companies that profit from Israel's Occupation of Palestinian Territories. JVP supports the right of individuals and communities to use the divestment tool in order to bring their financial portfolios in line with their values and applauds the use of nonviolent strategies in order to bring about a change in US policy towards the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

What's more, the resolution is very much in line with Jewish Voice for Peace's current campaigns to support divestment from companies that profit from the Israeli Occupation. This includes companies operating in or from occupied Palestinian territory, exploiting Palestinian labor and scarce environmental resources, providing materials or labor for settlements, or producing military or other equipment or materials used to violate human rights or to profit from the Occupation.

We draw inspiration from this victory and think that many people around the world, including Israelis and Palestinians who struggle every day to make democracy and equality a reality, will also take heart and redouble their efforts.

In a week during which the Israeli government continued to build on Occupied Palestinian land under the nose of the Vice President of the United States and declared Palestinian villages "closed military zones" for their unarmed protest against the Wall, the vote at UC Berkeley is a much needed victory. The authors of the resolution mentioned other human rights violators such as Congo and Morocco, demonstrating that holding Israel accountable can only advance the cause of human rights globally.

"I have been horrified by Israel's increasing desperation to defend both the indefensible and the self-defeating. At the same time, I am greatly inspired by the work of Palestinians protesting for democracy on the ground, with the support of Israelis and internationals. This vote shows there is so much we can do here in the United States to follow their example."
-- Jesse Bacon, JVP Board member and co-editor of [The Only Democracy blog](#).

The UC Berkeley vote also comes at a time of growing discussion around the Boycott Divestment Sanctions movement. There is nothing Jewish about a multinational corporation making money off of the Israeli Occupation. What's more, given the violent nature of the occupation and the growing backlash from the Israeli government and the defenders of its policies in the United States against any criticism, all nonviolent methods should be openly discussed and considered.

About JVP:

Jewish Voice for Peace is the only national Jewish organization that provides a voice for Jews and allies who believe that peace in the Middle East will be achieved through justice

and full equality for both Palestinians and Israelis. With offices in New York and California, 100,000 online activists, chapters across the country and an Advisory Board comprised of numerous prominent Jewish thinkers and artists, JVP supports nonviolent efforts here and in Israel-Palestine to end Israel's Occupation, expand human and civil rights, and implement a US policy based on international law and democracy. JVP opposes anti-Jewish, anti-Muslim, and anti-Arab bigotry and oppression and seeks an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem.