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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hampshire College becomes first college in U.S. to divest from Israeli Occupation!

Hampshire College in Amherst, MA, has become the first of any college or university in the U.S. to divest from companies on the grounds of their involvement in the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

This landmark move is a direct result of a two-year intensive campaign by the campus group, Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP). The group pressured Hampshire College's Board of Trustees to divest from six specific companies due to human rights concerns in occupied Palestine. Over 800 students, professors, and alumni have signed SJP's "institutional statement" calling for the divestment.

The proposal put forth by SJP was approved on Saturday, 7 Feb 2009 by the Board. By divesting from these companies, SJP believes that Hampshire has distanced itself from complicity in the illegal occupation and war crimes of Israel.

Meeting minutes from a committee of Hampshire's Board of Trustees confirm that "President Hexter acknowledged that it was the good work of SJP that brought this issue to the attention of the committee." This groundbreaking decision follows in Hampshire's history of being the first college in the country to divest from apartheid South Africa thirty-two years ago, a decision based on similar human rights concerns. This divestment was also a direct result of student pressure.

The divestment has so far been endorsed by Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, Rashid Khalidi, Vice President of the EU Parliament Luisa Morgantini, Cynthia McKinney, former member of the African National Congress Ronnie Kasrils, Mustafa Barghouti, Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, John Berger, Nobel Peace Laureate Mairead Maguire, and Roger Waters of Pink Floyd, among others.

The six corporations, all of which provide the Israeli military with equipment and services in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza are: Caterpillar, United Technologies, General Electric, ITT Corporation, Motorola, and Terex (see attached info sheet for more information on these corporations.) Furthermore, our policy prevents the reinvestment in any company involved in the illegal occupation.

SJP is responding to a call from Palestinian civil society for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) as a way of bringing non-violent pressure to bear on the state of

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Israel to end its violations of international law. SJP is following in the footsteps of many noted groups and institutions such as the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education in the UK, the Israeli group Gush Shalom, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, and the American Friends Service Committee.

As well as voicing our opposition to the illegal occupation and the consistent human rights violations of the Palestinian people, we as members of an institute of higher education see it as our moral responsibility to express our solidarity with Palestinian students whose access to education is severely inhibited by the Israeli occupation.

SJP has proven that student groups can organize, rally and pressure their schools to divest from the illegal occupation. The group hopes that this decision will pave the way for other institutions of higher learning in the U.S. to take similar stands.

Please email hampshiresjp@mail.com to schedule a phone interview.