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"Affirmative Statement"

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"Affirmative Statement"

Traditionally, Hampshire College has advocated for the oppressed, taking unpopular stands when others have preferred to turn away. In 1977 Hampshire College was the first college in the US to divest from Apartheid South Africa. In 2001 Hampshire was the first college to object to the war in Afghanistan. In this spirit and in light of the fact that the Israeli occupation is the longest ongoing occupation since World War II, we state our objection to the oppression of the Palestinian people. The Hampshire community hereby declares its commitment to work towards the end of this occupation. Furthermore we call upon Israel to end its policies of discrimination and to respect international law and Palestinian rights, including the right to self-determination. We support the Palestinian right to resist the occupation in accordance with international law. Our commitment includes the following policies ratified by Hampshire College :

" As an institution Hampshire College will not support, invest, or finance any individual, group or institution that directly profits from the occupation of Palestine. We call on other colleges and universities to enact similar policies.

" Hampshire College calls on the United States Government to stop financing Israel's occupation of Palestine.

In addition to economic measures, Hampshire College as an institution and a community hereby expresses its commitment to support the autonomy and self-determination of the Palestinian people, including but not limited to the following :

" We support dialogue on our campus about the conflict as long as it is sincere and serious about its intentions to end the oppression of the Palestinian people.

" Due to our mandate as an institution of higher education, we are committed to support the Palestinian right to education, through exchange programs and academic support

" In solidarity with the Palestinian people, our educational program will provide a stage for unheard Palestinian voices.

Hampshire College, in accordance with its moral imperatives, will persist in this course of action until the end of the occupation as defined by UN resolutions.

"Divestment Addendum"

Due to numerous questions over the nature of divestment in the first section of the affirmative statement, SJP has added the following addendum to clarify what is meant by divestment. Investments should not be made in any company that provides products or services, including financial services, to Israeli governmental or military bodies that are used to facilitate or undertake violent acts against civilians or violations of international law, or to Israeli or Palestinian organizations or groups that are used to facilitate or undertake violent acts against civilians or violations

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of international law. For the purposes of this investment screen this would include companies that :

1. Provide products or services that contribute to the maintenance of the Israeli military occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem ;
2. Provide products or services that contribute to the maintenance and expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories ;
3. Establish facilities or operations in Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories ;
4. Provide products or services that contribute to the maintenance and construction of the Separation Wall ;
5. Provide products or services that contribute to violent acts that target either Israeli or Palestinian civilians.

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

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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 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.

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English language sources of information :

<http://lauraflanders.firedoglake.com/2009/02/17/grittv-live-at-noon-does-gaza-matter/>

<http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article10304.shtml>

See menu on right-hand side of home page "Did Hampshire Divest ?" with Brian Van Slyke and Ali Abunimah =

<http://lauraflanders.firedoglake.com/>