

## University of Maine System Divestment Demands

IN LIGHT OF THE FACT that the University of Maine System (hereafter referenced as “UMS”) became one of the first 10 universities in the country to completely divest from apartheid South Africa in 1982,<sup>1</sup>

IN LIGHT OF THE FACT that the UMS divested fuel investments from the institution’s endowment assets, implemented ESG Guidelines for investments, committed to no new fossil fuel investments thereafter, and approved a long-term plan to fully divest from fossil fuels by 2030,<sup>2</sup>

IN LIGHT OF THE FACT that the UMS describes its primary vision and mission to cultivate a student-centered, community-engaged, inclusive, and supportive university system which has demonstrated receptiveness to prior divestment requests,

IN LIGHT OF THE FACT that the UMS has utilized the Office of the President to publish official statements regarding international crises in Ukraine<sup>3</sup> and Iran,<sup>4</sup> emphasizing international support for human rights, dignity, and safety against any form of violence,

IN LIGHT OF THE FACT that Israel faces condemnation for maintaining an apartheid system and committing violations of international law by two of most respected human rights organizations in the world, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch,<sup>5</sup>

IN LIGHT OF THE FACT that the United Nations independent human rights experts have decried Israel’s ongoing and systematic destruction of over 80 percent of the entire education system in Gaza, deeming the act “scholasticide,”<sup>6</sup>

IN LIGHT OF THE FACT that the International Court of Justice issued a preliminary ruling on January 31, 2024, stating the plausibility of Israel’s acts amount to genocide in the Gaza strip; followed by an advisory opinion on July 19, 2024, pointing to legal consequences arising from Israel’s illegal occupation of the Gaza strip and West Bank, including how Israel’s legislation and measures are violations of the international prohibition on racial segregation and apartheid,<sup>7-8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Institute for Nonviolence, Education, Research, and Training Staff, “Divest Yourself.”

<sup>2</sup> Langlois, “Board of Trustees disclose progress of fossil fuel divestment plan.”

<sup>3</sup> Ferrini-Mundy, “President Ferrini-Mundy’s statement on the invasion of Ukraine.”

<sup>4</sup> Ferrini-Mundy. “Standing in solidarity with our Iranian students, faculty, staff and neighbors near and far.”

<sup>5</sup> Human Rights Watch, “A Threshold Crossed.”

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, “Gaza: UN experts decry ‘systemic obliteration’ of education system.”

<sup>7</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Gaza: ICJ ruling offers hope...”

<sup>8</sup> International Court of Justice, “Legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.”

IN LIGHT OF THE FACT that currently over 40,861 Palestinians have been killed since Oct 7th including over 16,500 children with over 10,000 missing and over 94,398 injured with projections of over one million people experiencing death and starvation,<sup>9-10</sup>

IN LIGHT OF THE FACT that an estimated 39 million tons of debris have been generated in the Gaza Strip by this conflict; munitions containing heavy metals and explosive chemicals have been deployed in Gaza's densely populated areas with unexploded ordnance; Gaza's water, sanitation, hygiene, and solid waste management systems are almost entirely defunct; destruction of solar panels leaking lead and other heavy metals into soil and water sources; posing both short- and long-term risks to human health and the environment,<sup>11</sup>

IN LIGHT OF THE FACT that The Lancet, one of the oldest general medical journals in publication today, estimates that up to 186,000 Palestinian deaths could be attributable to the current armed conflict in Gaza, with many additional deaths in the coming months and years due to indirect health implications; this publication states that an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, accompanied by measures to enable the distribution of medical supplies, food, clean water, and other resources for basic human needs, is essential.<sup>12</sup>

## **Following Precedents: Universities and Local Municipalities:**

IN LIGHT OF THE FACT that Universities and Colleges around the world including: Brown University; Northwestern University; Portland State University; Evergreen State College; Goldsmith University of London; University of California, Riverside; California State University, Sacramento; Trinity College Dublin; San Francisco State University; Wesleyan University; and more have begun the process of working with student organizers in disclosing investments, divesting from the military industrial complex, and implementing investment ethics centered around human rights,<sup>13</sup>

IN LIGHT OF THE FACT that influential networks in the educational community, including the state's official teachers union, the Maine Education Association, have urged similar divestment demands to the trustees of the state pension system, the Public Employees Retirement System. Their resolution calls for investment decisions which "do not contribute to any corporation, state-owned entity, or financial product identified as being complicit in the violation of the human

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<sup>9</sup> Aljazeera, "Israel-Gaza war in maps and charts: Live tracker."

<sup>10</sup> FAO UN, "Hunger Hotspots Report: famine looms in Gaza while risk of starvation persists in Sudan, Haiti, Mali, and South Sudan."

<sup>11</sup> United Nations Environment Programme, "Environmental impact of the conflict in Gaza: Preliminary assessment of environmental impacts."

<sup>12</sup> The Lancet, "Counting the dead in Gaza: difficult but essential."

<sup>13</sup> American Friends Service Committee, "Divesting for Palestinian Rights."

rights guaranteed to Palestinian civilians under international law”, as reported by the Bangor Daily News on May 21, 2024.<sup>14</sup>

IN LIGHT OF THE FACT that on September 4, 2024, the City Council of Portland, Maine unanimously voted to divest from companies “complicit in the current and ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza and occupation of Palestine, including, without limitation, all entities on the Divestment List when it is feasible and carries no financial penalty to the City” and calls on the City Manager to not establish future direct investments in these companies, as well as in Israel Bonds, becoming the second city in the United States to divest for Palestinian rights,<sup>15</sup>

## **We, the undersigned student organizations, demand that the University of Maine System officially:**

1. Publicly disclose all investments in the statewide holdings portfolio. *If the Board is unaware of its holdings, it must request such information of its fund managers.*
2. Divest its Managed Investment Pool, Pension Fund, and Operating Fund from all financial holdings, assets, and/or stocks of Israel-based companies and of all companies doing business with or in Israel, in addition to full divestment from Israel Bonds. If relevant holdings are held in commingled accounts or mutual funds, the University’s Board of Trustees must direct the manager of those funds to divest, or find another alternative vehicle. These companies are listed in Addendum A.
3. Discontinue partnerships with companies proven to equip Israeli weapons and technology systems which impose indiscriminate violence and detention onto Palestinians in Gaza as well as the West Bank. These companies are included in Addendum B. We ask that the UMS administration issue a formal Investment Policy Statement, follow a reasonable timeline for policy implementation, and share periodic reports to a committee composed of students and faculty members.
4. End all academic ties with Israel, including research partnerships and institutional promotion and/or funding of study abroad programs to Israel.
5. Offer a public acknowledgment of the magnitude of tragedy in Palestine, particularly in Gaza, alongside neighboring countries such as Lebanon and Syria. We ask you to publish this statement and exercise parity in your reporting as well as support services systems, reflecting enduring student requests.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Kobin, “Teachers Union Urges Maine to Divest from Israeli ‘Human Rights Abuses.’”

<sup>15</sup> American Friends Service Committee, “Divesting for Palestinian Rights.”

<sup>16</sup> Guest Essayist. “UMaine admin need to stand with Arab students as equally as Israeli students.”

6. Adopt the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, written by international scholars working in Antisemitism Studies and related fields, including Jewish, Holocaust, Israel, Palestine, and Middle East Studies, as a university system to provide a usable, concise, and historically informed core definition of antisemitism with a set of guidelines.<sup>17</sup>

*The corporations listed in Addendums A and B have been specifically identified as complicit in the occupation of the West Bank and/or in Israel's war of annihilation on Gaza.*

**Signed,**

Maine Students for Palestine\*  
 UMaine Jewish Voice for Peace  
 UMaine Here4theKids  
 UMaine Permaculture and Gardening Club  
 UMaine Green Team  
 UMaine Wilde Stein  
 UMaine Asian Student Association  
 UMaine Disability on Campus  
 UMaine Horticulture Club  
 UMaine History Club  
 UMaine Triota  
 UMaine Climate Action  
 UMaine Humanitarian Club  
 USM Poets' Society  
 UMaine Storied: Creative Writing Club  
 UMaine Art and Design Collective  
 UMaine College Democrats  
 UMaine Waste Minimizers  
 UMaine French Club

*\*A grassroots, student-led network including 50+ members attending the University of Maine System, including Portland/Gorham, Orono, Farmington, Augusta, and more.*

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<sup>17</sup> The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism.

## **Addendums A and B: Corporations complicit in West Bank Occupation and genocide in Gaza.**

**Addendum A:** Authoritative lists of corporations to be targeted for divestment as endorsed by the Palestinian BDS National Committee<sup>18</sup> and the American Friends Service Committee<sup>19</sup>:

BDS National Committee's Divestment Targets:

<https://bdsmovement.net/Act-Now-Against-These-Companies-Profiting-From-Genocide>

AFSC Divestment List:

<https://investigate.info/sites/default/files/attachment/Divesting%20for%20Palestinian%20Rights%20-%20divestment%20list%20May%202024.pdf>

**Addendum B:** Target companies identified in the University of Maine's Endowment Fund, in Active Partnership with the Maine Defense Industry Alliance

Intel, Barclays, Volvo, RTX (formerly Raytheon, includes Pratt and Whitney, their subsidiary operating in Berwick), Boeing, BAE Systems, Lockheed Martin, Genie Energy Ltd, Caterpillar, General Dynamics, Northrop Grumman, L3Harris, Energean Israel Finance Ltd., Nice Ltd.

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<sup>18</sup> BDS National Committee, "Act Now Against These Companies Profiting from the Genocide of the Palestinian People."

<sup>19</sup> American Friends Service Committee, "Divesting for Palestinian Rights."

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