

## **Cornell Faculty and Staff Divestment Petition**

Original document links:

<https://deanoffaculty.cornell.edu/faculty-governance/faculty-senate/pending-matters/proposed-resolution-for-divestment-from-morally-reprehensible-military-companies-and-institutions/> (August 11, 2024)

<https://bpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/blogs.cornell.edu/dist/3/6798/files/2024/05/Cornell-Faculty-Staff-Divestment-Petition-and-Signatures-d2f7f63f6c583f45.pdf> (May 6, 2024)

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### **Cornell Faculty and Staff Divestment Petition**

We call on Cornell University to divest from the companies that directly enable and profit from the war on Gaza and the occupation of the West Bank. Divestment means that Cornell would sell all its investments/shares in these companies. For Cornell to keep these investments would mean to continue to directly support and profit from war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. Divesting means refusing this criminal profit and allocating Cornell investments to economic sectors that are not morally reprehensible, upholding Cornell's core values. Cornell undergraduate students have voted "yes" for divestment by a 2:1 ratio in a historic referendum. We want President Pollack and the Board of Trustees to know that the faculty and staff are on their side.

In 2016, the Board of Trustees committed Cornell to divest from companies whose "actions or inactions are 'morally reprehensible.'" This divestment threshold has long been met. Today, we are witness to what the International Court of Justice has described as a "plausible" genocide. Francesca Albanese, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, reported in March that "the threshold indicating Israel's commission of genocide is met." Human Rights Watch and others have also reported that Israel has committed multiple war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The depth of Palestinian suffering is unfathomable. More than five percent of Gazans are confirmed to have been killed or wounded since the beginning of the war, and many more lie unidentified under the rubble. More than a million Gazans, half of them children, are now facing immediate death from famine. Already in February, Gaza's entire population was facing "the highest share of acute food insecurity ever classified worldwide." The threshold of famine was imminent in March 2024; today, "Gaza's entire population is in the

state of crisis, emergency, or catastrophe/famine. The Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development has described this as a “horrific milestone,” and has called on “Israel to take immediate action to put an end to this mass—and preventable—suffering.”

The explosive force of the missiles that have been dropped on Gaza—a territory equivalent in area to the city of Las Vegas—exceeds that of the two atomic bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki and has killed more civilians than any war in the 21st century. The 2000-pound bombs made by General Dynamics and dropped relentlessly on Gaza have long been deemed inappropriate for use in urban areas due to the mass casualties they cause, with a radius of destruction and injury equivalent in area to 58 soccer fields. Yet a New York Times investigation concluded that during just the first six weeks of the war in Gaza, Israel used this most destructive bomb at least 206 times in densely populated urban areas, including in zones where it had specifically directed civilians to take shelter.

An American Friends Service Committee analysis of companies profiting from the attacks on Gaza shows that “the scale of destruction and war crimes in Gaza would not be possible without this continued flow of weapons from the U.S.” While a large majority of Americans disapprove of the genocide in Gaza and our government’s weapons supply and other support, Washington continues to fund and enable this slaughter and to undermine the trust in American democracy.

Intellectuals are called to speak truth and challenge injustice. All scholars of conscience must actively resist genocide. There can be no neutrality: we either explicitly oppose the massacres or we enable them. This is a critical moment in the moral life of our institution and its faculty and staff. What will happen to our ethical core—to our humanity and that of current and future students—if we do not act forthrightly now?

As Cornelians, we shoulder a particular responsibility due to our University’s partnership with the Technion Institute, which designs remote-controlled bulldozers that demolish Palestinian homes and serves as the “R&D wing of the Israeli military.” Disturbingly, these and other weapons are marketed as having been “field-tested” on the captive Palestinian populations. We are concerned about these ethical failures as well as our University’s legal standing, as complicity with genocide by non-state actors is increasingly seen as a violation of international law.

Though many of us have watched the events of the last seven months with growing despair, we do not have to remain paralyzed. We must act now in the ways that are available to us. We must show our students that we, too, recognize our responsibility as historical actors.

Divestment campaigns work. Such efforts were central to the successful anti-apartheid struggles in the U.S. during the 1980s and are shaping the struggle against climate change today. Let us stand together on behalf of peace and human rights. Let us reaffirm the values of human dignity that brought many of us to our fields of study in the first place. Let us join the scores of university communities across the country that are pressuring their institutions to take the principled step of divestment.

#### Our Demands:

1. Adopt Cornell's standards for divestment, in accordance with policies set by the Board of Trustees on January 29, 2016, and divest from companies whose "actions or inactions are 'morally reprehensible.'"
2. Specifically, divest from defense companies, arms manufacturers, and other institutions that sustain the ongoing war on Gaza and the occupation of the West Bank.\*
3. Terminate funding for research used to develop military technologies at the Jacobs Technion-Cornell Institute.
4. Formulate a policy and process for auditing all investments so that they comply with the policy of not being morally reprehensible.

\*Companies, arms manufacturers, and research institutions that develop military technologies that sustain and profit from the genocide in Gaza include BAE Systems, Boeing, Elbit Systems, General Dynamics, L3Harris Technologies, Leonardo, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, RTX, Technion Institute, and ThyssenKrupp. In addition, each of these military manufacturers materially contributes to ongoing human rights violations in at least one of the following countries: Azerbaijan, Chile, China, the Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, Lebanon, Mexico, Myanmar, the Philippines, Sudan, Ukraine, the US, Venezuela, and Yemen.

Cornell Coalition for Justice in Palestine

Cornell Jewish Alliance for Justice

Endorsed by the following faculty and staff:

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5. Esra Akcan, Professor/Architecture
6. Benjamin Anderson, History of Art and Classics

7. Catherine M. Appert, Associate Professor, Music
8. Sandra Liliana Arias Suarez, Biomedical Engineering
9. Sabrina Axster, Migrations
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30. Jamie Budnick, Sociology
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35. AC, College of Arts & Sciences
36. HC, Neurological Surgery
37. Marty Cain, Staff, Mann Library
38. Mary Company, Library
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40. Thomas Carruthers, Architecture
41. Carrie Chalmers, College of Human Ecology
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44. Julia Chang, Romance Studies

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69. Elise Finielz, Romance Studies
70. Julia Finkelstein, Division of Nutritional Sciences
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81. Durba Ghosh, History
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