

Free Palestine Commencement

May 14, 2024. The UC Berkeley Free Palestine Encampment.

Twenty-three days into our encampment. Two hundred twenty-two days into the Palestinian Genocide in Gaza. Seventy-six years into the Zionist conquest of Palestine, the colonization of its land and the dispossession of its people.

Palestine condenses all the cruelties of this modern world order into a single geography: from the extermination of indigenous peoples, to racist border regimes to industrialized killing and the policing of insurgent life. Palestine is also the place where the aspirations and resistances of a free people converge. This long settler-colonial history haunts our genocidal present – and the Palestinian refusal to capitulate summons us to action.

In February, we launched our ten-week Sather Gate Blockade. In April, our gate protest transformed into the Free Palestine Encampment. Two weeks into our encampment, the Chancellor's Office entered into negotiations. Now these negotiations have concluded. Confronted with the red tape of procedural evil, constantly fending off interference from the UC Regents, we consider the results of this negotiation only the next terrain of struggle for full divestment and academic boycott of the Zionist state. The road ahead is long.

We began as a gate action, became a camp, and are only just beginning.

For three weeks, our encampment has been one node in the global student revolt for Palestine which has reinvigorated our people on the ground. Fighting on the terrain of the university has forced us to confront every layer of state and corporate power: from the trustees, regents, and governors to university administrators, Zionist lobbyists, and influential donors. In our struggle against the university administration and UC Regents, we have brought to light the starkly anti-democratic framework of the UC system itself, which has been designed to shield each of its components from accountability.

These negotiations have unveiled how university bureaucracy perpetuates and supports U.S. imperialism. Divestment task forces and program reviews without popular pressure to hold them accountable serve only to fortify these structures and contain insurgency. The containment effort of university administrators and the UC Regents underscores the remarkable power of our movement – a testament to the global uprising against Zionist settler-colonialism and U.S. imperialism. We know that our achievements and fates are interconnected – a constellation of victories, big and small. If one encampment falls,

another rises. To evade capture, our power mutates. Along the way, we take stock of the progress made and the struggle ahead. Again and again, we commence.

By confronting the Zionist state, our revolt has cut to the heart of U.S. empire. For seven months, the Palestinian Genocide has held up a mirror to American imperial liberalism – and liberals cannot bear the sight of their own reflection. This is why they dare not name Palestine, why they defame the Resistance, why they cannot even whisper the word genocide. Liberalism cannot contain our revolt because it cannot meet our demands. To recognize even partially the Palestinian condition is to indict a world order premised on excluding Palestine from the family of nations and expelling Palestinians from the realm of the human.

Yet, as Palestinians have shown us every day for the past seven months – for the past 76 years – they do not require colonial recognition as a precondition for their humanity. Their defiance, their steadfastness, their resistance in the face of annihilation exceeds every limit that the U.S.-Israeli killing machine would impose on them. Palestinians have given us the roadmap to liberation, and we will keep treading that path – from Berkeley to Merced, all the way to a free Jerusalem in a free Palestine – from the river to the sea.

For Palestine, *we must fight.*

For Gaza and our Martyrs, *we must win.*

For all of us, and because of The Palestinian Resistance, *we will win.*

**Long Live the Palestinian People, Long Live the Palestinian Resistance.
The Revolution continues.**

UCB Divestment and Boycott Fact Sheet

Today, the Free Palestine Encampment at UC Berkeley received a public statement from Chancellor Christ in response to their demands.

This statement laid out policy frameworks for the following:

1. Expedited UC Berkeley Foundation process to divest from weapons manufacturing, mass incarceration, and/or surveillance industries.

- UCBF to establish and convene divestment task force by June 30.
- Divestment task force to issue report on industry-specific divestment.
- Industries to include Weapons Manufacturing, Mass Incarceration, and Surveillance.

2. Pathway to boycott of Israeli university programs on grounds of anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab discrimination.

- UC Berkeley to immediately review global exchange and internship programs for compliance with [UC Anti-Discrimination Policy](#).
- Policy explicitly prohibits anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian discrimination (Sec. VII.3).
- UCB Divest Coalition to assist developing transparent review process by December.

Additionally, Chancellor Christ...

- Expressed her personal support for an “immediate and permanent ceasefire” in Gaza.
- Rejected criticism of Israel as antisemitic: “Support for the plight of Palestinians, including protest, should not be conflated with hatred or anti-semitism.”
- Recognized the “extraordinary death and destruction in Gaza,” including the “horrific killing of tens of thousands of Palestinians and the destruction of the Palestinian educational infrastructure.”

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For more information on UC complicity in the Palestinian Genocide, see the following:

[UC Investments Info Sheet](#)

Investigate (<https://investigate.afsc.org>) Investigate aims to expose corporate involvement in oppressive state violence structures and to promote standards for corporate social responsibility and respect for human rights.

Who Profits (<https://www.whoprofits.org>) Who Profits is an independent research center dedicated to exposing the role of the private sector in the Israeli occupation.



May 14, 2024

Dear Free Palestine Encampment,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and members of campus leadership to discuss the UCB Divest Coalition's demands. I found many of the conversations quite valuable and I want to recognize your efforts to maintain a professional, organized, and productive approach during a very difficult time. In addition, I want to again acknowledge your efforts to peacefully protest the extraordinary death and destruction in Gaza. I, too, am concerned about the horrific killing of tens of thousands of Palestinians as well as the destruction of the Palestinian educational infrastructure. I plan to make a public statement by the end of the month sharing my personal support for government officials' efforts to secure an immediate and permanent ceasefire. Such support for the plight of Palestinians, including protest, should not be conflated with hatred or antisemitism.

I understand that the UCB Divest Coalition believes that the current allocation of the University's investment portfolio is not consistent with our values.

In 2014, the University of California was the first American public university to commit itself to upholding the UN Principles for Responsible Investment, principles that include a commitment to avoid investing in "[b]usinesses whose profits are derived from direct harm to public safety, [or] the unlawful deprivation of human dignity." [1] I believe this standard requires us to avoid investing in companies that are complicit in, or derive profit from, serious human rights violations. [2]

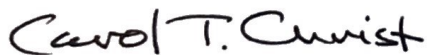
I strongly support, as I have always supported, investigating the alignment of UC Berkeley's investments with our institution's core values. Those values include a respect for equality, human rights, a commitment to fostering the conditions for human growth and development, and an abhorrence of war. The University of California has decided in the past to divest from businesses that were determined to not be aligned with our values. We should examine whether UC Berkeley's investments continue to align with our values or should be modified in order to do so.

I understand that the UCB Divest Coalition will continue its advocacy for divestment from Israel by demanding an end to direct and indirect investments in companies that derive profit from, or whose conduct is complicit in violations of international law and/or human rights. This includes companies that profit from weapons manufacturing, mass incarceration, and/or surveillance industries. As stated by the University of California Office of the President, divestment from companies on the basis of whether or not they do business with or in Israel is not supported. The sale of direct investments is not within the authority of the Office of the Chancellor but rather lies with the UC Regents.

I also understand the UCB Divest Coalition's demands include academic boycott. I do not support academic boycotts. However, as we are unified in our desire to ensure that our academic partnerships remain in alignment with the UC Anti-Discrimination Policy, including anti-Palestinian discrimination, the University will review all complaints about existing global exchange and internship programs and review new and future programs to ensure their compliance with the Anti-Discrimination Policy. As discussed, the UCB Divest Coalition will formally report any anti-Palestinian discrimination in institutions with which we have existing global exchange and internship programs. UC Berkeley will address (including termination if remedy is unavailable) its programs that violate this policy and will cease its student participation in programs administered by the University of California or other institutions that also violate this policy, if other appropriate remedy is unavailable.

To ensure we continue to meet our obligation under the UC Anti-Discrimination Policy, the University will establish a transparent process by December 2024 for the ongoing review of such complaints. The development of this process will include relevant stakeholder groups, including the UCB Divest Coalition and, upon its agreement, the Senate Academic Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Campus Climate. As we begin our discussions about this process, I understand that the UCB Divest Coalition would like for the review to be co-led by the UC Berkeley Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination and the Division of Equity and Inclusion and to consider, as evidence of discrimination, reports from current and former students and faculty as well as reports by the United Nations, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

I believe I have addressed all the demands stated by the UCB Divest Coalition in good faith as allowed by the authority of the UC Berkeley Office of the Chancellor, and I commit this Office to their enactment.



Signed by Carol T. Christ on May 14, 2024

[1] See Office of the President, "University of California joins UN-supported Principles for Responsible Investment" (Sept. 22, 2014); Office of President, "UC Investments," www.ucop.edu/investment-office/sustainable-investment/sustainability-framework/index.html.

[2] See, for comparison, the Ethical Guidelines for the Norwegian Sovereign Wealth Fund, which prohibit investments when "there is an unacceptable risk that the company contributes to or is responsible for: a) serious or systematic human rights violations b) serious violations of the rights of individuals in situations of war or conflict c) the sale of weapons to states engaged in armed conflict that use the weapons in ways that constitute serious and systematic violations of the international rules on the conduct of hostilities." Council on Ethics, Norwegian Sovereign Wealth Fund, *Guidelines for Observation and Exclusion of companies from the Government Pension Fund Global (GPF)*, Sec. 4 (Sept. 5, 2022).



Foundation and Endowment related commitments

I agree to support a comprehensive and rigorous examination of our investments and our socially responsible investment strategy. Such a process will include:

- **UC Berkeley Foundation ESG Committee Requests:** I will ask the Executive Committee of the Foundation, at its May meeting, to expedite the process for the ESG committee to hear concerns regarding the investment of a targeted list of companies due to their participation in weapons manufacturing, mass incarceration, and/or surveillance industries. If the ESG Subcommittee determines that the issue appears serious enough to consider divestment, the Subcommittee will consult with the Chancellor's Office, the Academic Senate, the Associated Students of University of California, and the Graduate Assembly (or its subsequent entity), to establish a task force with relevant expertise, including faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, staff, and Trustees. Assuming the ESG votes in favor of creating a task force, I will request that it be convened no later than June 30, 2024. The task force would consider divestment based on the 5 criteria noted in the Berkeley Foundation's divestment guidelines.[3]
 - I will urge the UC Berkeley Foundation to disclose the ESG In Action Report annually. This document should strive to include the size and scope of industry-specific investments.
- **UC Berkeley Divestment Task Force:** If the UCBF ESG does not vote in favor of creating a task force, I will immediately (by June 14th) constitute a task force made up of students, faculty, and staff to develop recommendations regarding industry specific or company specific divestments to present to the UCBF ESG Chair.
 - I acknowledge the UCB Divest Coalition demand is full divestment from Israel. As stated by the University of California Office of the President, such divestment is not permissible. In no way may any criteria established limit in any way investing in companies on the basis of whether or not they do business with or in Israel. To respond to the urgency of this moment as well as the demands, the task force will begin by immediately addressing industry-specific divestment, which will include, but is not limited to, weapons manufacturing, mass incarceration, and surveillance industries. The task force shall produce its report on this first phase by September 1, 2024 in time for consideration at the ESG Subcommittee's Fall 2024 meeting. The report will be published publicly on a UCB website.
- **UC Regents Endowment Request:** I will encourage the Chair of the Regents Investment Committee to develop a framework to consider ethical issues concerning investment and any changes in investment strategy. Such a framework should involve broad-based engagement with the community.
- **Encampment:** I respectfully ask that the UCB Divest Coalition respond with your plan and timeline for decampment.

Carol T. Christ

Signed by Carol T. Christ on May 5, 2024