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Princeton Divestment Campaign

November 2023

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<https://www.dailyprincetonian.com/article/2023/12/princeton-news-adpol-israel-divestment-petition-rally-sixth-in-past-twenty-years>

Dear President Eisgruber, Members of the Resources Committee of the Council of the Princeton University Community (CPUC), and Members of the Board of Trustees,

We, the undersigned faculty, staff, students, and alumni of Princeton University, write to express our profound concern with Princeton's continuing financial and institutional ties to the State of Israel, which is conducting a [genocidal military campaign](#) against the Palestinian people and has, for decades, implemented a [regime of apartheid](#) within Palestine/Israel.

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are currently being subjected to the deadliest and most destructive assault in modern history. At the time of this writing, at [least 14,000 Palestinians](#) have been killed. [Two thirds](#) of those who have been killed by Israel's siege are women and children. On November 13th, *The Washington Post* [concluded](#) that 1 out of every 200 people in Gaza had been killed by Israel's onslaught. On November 21, *AP News* [reported](#) that Gaza health officials have lost the ability to count the dead. On November 25, *The New York Times* [reported](#) that civilians are being killed in Gaza at a rate unparalleled by any modern war. Thus far, more than [1.7 million people](#) — nearly 80 percent of the Palestinian population of Gaza— have been displaced. Israel's continuing use of [collective punishment](#), which is [illegal under international law](#), is a longstanding part of the state's war on the Palestinian people, including its [indiscriminate bombing campaigns](#) in Gaza in 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2021. The UN has [recorded](#) more deaths of aid workers than in any prior conflict in the history of the organization. Reporters sans frontières has [reported](#) that 48 journalists have been killed in Gaza since the start of the war. In the West Bank, Israeli settler violence — which has been described as a ["policy of terror"](#) — has [escalated significantly](#), and [horrific incidents](#) of [arbitrary arrest and torture](#) have increased throughout the Occupied Territories.

The State of Israel and Israeli politicians have openly [signaled genocidal intent](#) in Gaza. Palestinian civilians have been characterized as ["partners in terrorism"](#) and ["human animals."](#) and members of the Knesset have [called for a new Nakba](#), declaring that ["the children of Gaza have brought this upon themselves."](#) Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent invocation of the biblical tribe of *Amalek* is tantamount to [a call for the extermination of every man, woman, and child](#) in Gaza. Israeli President Isaac Herzog has declared the ["entire nation"](#) is responsible for the October 7th attacks, and the Israeli Minister of Energy and Infrastructure Israel Katz demanded that the illegal siege on Gaza continue until the Palestinians living there ["leave the world."](#) [Leaked reports](#) from the Israeli Intelligence Ministry proposing the removal of the Palestinians in Gaza to the Sinai Peninsula present a chilling roadmap for ethnic cleansing.

Princeton University proudly bears the motto "In the Nation's Service and in the Service of Humanity." **Time and time again, Princeton has shown that divestiture is a key tool in the service of humanity.** In 1978, after [years of student campaigning](#), Princeton University selectively divested from companies complicit in South African apartheid. In 2006, [Princeton](#)

[dissociated](#) itself from its investments in Darfur, opting to divest from “any company actively conducting operations in the Sudan that supports acts of genocide or renders assistance to perpetrators of genocide.” As recently as November 7, 2022, the Princeton Alumni Weekly [published an article](#) wherein President Eisgruber, recalling the University’s response to “major controversies, including divestment issues pertaining to South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s and the fossil fuel industry today,” pointed out that “a strict policy of neutrality would preclude any divestment.” However, he writes, “Princeton has taken a different tack.”

We cannot as people of conscience stand idly by and claim to be in the service of humanity only when it is popularly palatable and financially expedient. When nations are unable to uphold the values that they themselves profess, it falls on civic institutions and ordinary citizens to identify a better path. The international community is [unequivocal](#) that [human rights](#) and [democratic values](#) have been and continue to be undermined by the State of Israel. On October 28th, Craig Mokhiber, the director of the New York office of the UN high commissioner for human rights stepped down to protest Israel’s attack on Gaza as “[a text book case of genocide](#).” As an institution that prides itself on being a center of research and learning conducted in the service of the nation and humanity, it is imperative that we review our ties to this inhumanity. There can be no neutrality in the face of such flagrant injustice.

Princeton University must not participate in both the ongoing massacre in Gaza and the continued implementation of Israel’s apartheid regime, which has been enabled by investments in companies and institutions that have worked to enact and normalize Israel’s violence against Palestinians for decades.

We demand the following:

1. **Princeton University must divest and [dissociate](#) its endowment of all direct and indirect holdings in companies that profit from or engage in the State of Israel’s ongoing military campaign, [occupation](#), and [apartheid policies](#) until such time as the State of Israel**
 - a. Ends the illegal siege on Gaza and immediately adheres to a permanent ceasefire
 - b. Ends the occupation of internationally recognized Palestinian land and dismantles the physical and legal structures that currently constitute an [apartheid state](#) as defined in 2002 by the [International Criminal Court](#)
 - c. Recognizes the right of Palestinian citizens of Israel to live in full equality
 - d. Respects, protects, and promotes the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in [UN resolution 194](#)
2. **Princeton University must refrain from any form of academic or cultural association with Israeli institutions and businesses, in line with the [Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel](#).** Importantly, this boycott

is of [institutions, not individuals](#). The affiliation of Israeli cultural workers to an Israeli cultural institution is not grounds for applying the boycott.

- 3. Princeton University must cultivate affiliations with Palestinian academic and cultural institutions directly without requiring them to partner with Israeli counterparts as an explicit or implicit condition for such support.**

As Princetonians, we join our efforts with [students across the country](#) in renewing the [urgent call for divestment](#). Student-led referendums for Princeton University's divestment from Israel's apartheid regime have been ongoing for [more than twenty years](#). A vote calling for divestment passed by a large margin among [graduate students](#) in 2015, and the 2022 Caterpillar referendum similarly demonstrated [wide support for divestment](#) among undergraduates.

Princeton University's long history of divestment establishes the moral and institutional framework that necessitates the University divest from Israel today. In the 1985 "[Summary of Report on Matters Related to the Republic of South Africa](#)," the Board of Trustees declared that divestiture should be considered "when such action seems required to prevent the University from being associated with a company whose behavior has been found to represent . . . a clear and serious conflict with central values of the University." In 2006, the CPUC recommended programmatic divestiture from any company that is "providing the instrumentalities with which to commit genocide where the company knows or should know that those instrumentalities would be used to commit genocide."

We echo the words of the brave anti-apartheid students of the [Princeton Coalition for Divestment](#), who wrote in 1985; "It is time that the values that Princeton professes to embody be made visible to the entire world." **Princeton must take its own values seriously and act accordingly, as it has done in the past.**

[See this form to sign the letter](#)

Signed,

Organizations

Princeton Committee on Palestine
Princeton Students for Justice in Palestine
Princeton Faculty for Justice in Palestine
Alliance of Jewish Progressives
Princeton Graduate Students United, Progressive Caucus
Princeton Young Democratic Socialists of America
Princeton American Indian & Indigenous Studies Working Group
Third Cinema Reading Group

South Asian Progressive Alliance
Pakistani Students Association
Native Graduate Students of Princeton
Ellipses Slam Poetry
Princeton Arab Society

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Brooke Holmes, Susan Dod Brown Professor of Classics
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Tehseen Thaver, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies
Gyan Prakash, Dayton-Stockton Professor of History
Tera W. Hunter, Edwards Professor of American History; Professor of History and African American Studies
Anna Arabindan-Kesson, Associate Professor, Department of African American Studies & Department of Art and Archaeology
Moamen Elmassry, Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of Molecular Biology
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Anna Brouwer, Managing Editor, Princeton University Art Museum
Chika Okeke-Agulu, Robert Schirmer Professor of Art & Archaeology and African American
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