



Friday, May 31, 2024

Dear University of Windsor Administration, Senate, and Board of Governors:

RE: ACADEMIC AND FINANCIAL DIVESTMENT FROM ISRAEL AND ITS PRODUCTS

The University of Windsor Students' Alliance (UWSA) passed a motion in support of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement. (“**Appendix A**”) This decision was made in recognition of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and the need for concrete action to support the Palestinian people in their struggle for dignity, human rights, and self-determination.

We, the UWSA, stand in solidarity with the people of Palestine, and are committed to advocating for justice and peace. The crisis has now reached 237 days, with devastating impacts.

- At least 36,096 Palestinians have been killed—more than 15,000 of those are children.¹
- Over 81,136 Palestinians have been injured.²
- More than 10,000 Palestinians are missing.³
- More than half of Gaza’s homes have been destroyed or damaged.⁴
- All 12 universities in Gaza have been destroyed.⁵

¹ AJLabs. “Israel-Gaza War in Maps and Charts: Live Tracker.” Al Jazeera, May 28, 2024. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2023/10/9/israel-hamas-war-in-maps-and-charts-live-tracker>.

² Presse, AFP - Agence France. “Health Ministry in Hamas-Run Gaza Says War Death Toll at 36,096.” Barron’s, May 28, 2024. <https://www.barrons.com/news/health-ministry-in-hamas-run-gaza-says-war-death-toll-at-36-096-flcd9455>.

³ “10,000 People Missing in Gaza since Israeli Attacks Began over 210 Days Ago.” Anadolu Ajansı, May 4, 2024. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/10-000-people-missing-in-gaza-since-israeli-attacks-began-over-210-days-ago/3209480#:~:text=Nearly%2010%2C000%20people%20are%20either,the%20Gaza%20Strip%20since%20Oct>.

⁴ Lederer, Edith M. “The Unprecedented Destruction of Housing in Gaza Hasn’t Been Seen since World War II, the UN Says.” AP News, May 3, 2024. <https://apnews.com/article/un-report-gaza-destruction-housing-economy-recovery-4f61dcca7db3fd5eb3da5c6a25001e12#>.

⁵ Al-Mughrabi, Nidal. “Gazans Strive to Study as War Shatters Education System | Reuters.” Gazans strive to study as war shatters education system, May 13, 2024. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/gazans-strive-study-war-shatters-education-system-2024-05-13/>.



- 30 out of 36 of the hospitals have been demolished.⁶
- 86% of groundwater wells in Gaza are not operational.⁷
- 267 places of worship—including mosques, churches, and synagogues—have been damaged or destroyed.⁸

We fully support the International Court of Justice’s (ICJ) decision to halt all attacks and commend the court's efforts to enforce provisional measures aimed at protecting civilians. The actions of the Israeli government are not only unacceptable and cruel—they are a blatant violation of international law and human decency. This is history repeating itself, and the world must speak up. All institutions, governments, and communities must stand together to demand an end to these atrocities. Silence and inaction are complicity.

Universities are intended to foster environments that are safe and conducive to creating a better world, where people can share thoughts, opinions, ideas, and research under the protection of academic freedom. For generations, these institutions have also been places where societal norms and change have been challenged and reconstructed. As students, we refuse to be complicit in genocide, war, and arms manufacturing as they undermine the very foundation of educational advancement and integrity.

⁶ Save the Children International. “Over 2% of Gaza’s Child Population Killed or Injured in Six Months of War.” Save the Children International, April 4, 2024. <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/over-2-gaza-s-child-population-killed-or-injured-six-months-war>.

⁷ “Ochaopt.” HOSTILITIES IN THE GAZA STRIP AND ISRAEL - REPORTED HUMANITARIAN IMPACT, April 2024. https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/Gaza_casualties_info-graphic_14_Jan_2024%20final.pdf.

⁸ Saber, Indlieb Farazi. “A ‘Cultural Genocide’: Which of Gaza’s Heritage Sites Have Been Destroyed?” Al Jazeera, January 14, 2024. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/14/a-cultural-genocide-which-of-gazas-heritage-sites-have-been-destroyed>.



If the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the ICJ have indeed found the leadership of Israel guilty of human rights violations, this sets a precedent that cannot be ignored. What then is stopping the University of Windsor from aligning its actions with the findings and rulings of these respected international bodies? The University has both a moral and ethical obligation to ensure that its investments and partnerships do not indirectly support or condone these actions. By divesting from entities that have been identified as violators of international law by the ICC and ICJ, the University not only upholds its commitment to ethical standards but also contributes to the global call for justice and respect for human rights.

As students across North America exercise their right to assemble and protest, we are unfortunately witnessing universities and colleges consent to unnecessary brutality and state-sanctioned violence against the students that they have been entrusted to protect. The UWSA strongly condemns these escalations and the repression of students' rights and freedom of expression.

The University of Windsor Students' Alliance calls on the University of Windsor to:

1. Disclose all investments held in endowments, working capital assets and other financial holdings of the University hereafter;
2. Divest the University's endowment, capital assets and other financial holdings from all investments that sustain Israeli apartheid, occupation and the illegal settlement of Palestine;
3. Enhance and increase screening processes for all investments to ensure alignment with the purpose of the University of Windsor's Responsible Investment (RI) Policy;
4. Terminate all partnerships with Israeli academic institutions that either:
 - a. Operate in settlement in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, or
 - b. Support or sustain the apartheid policies of the state of Israel and its ongoing genocide in Gaza.



5. Implement comprehensive supports for Palestinian students at the University, including mental health support, reasonable academic accommodations, knowledge building regarding Palestinian identity, and cultural appreciation programs in collaboration with the UWSA;
6. Ensure that UWSA representation is present during all discussions between students and administration with respect to matters related to Palestine/BDS; and
7. In the event that the UWSA Board of Directors request that the University serve on the BDS Committee of the UWSA, then the University will agree to send a representative to participate in the subcommittee of the Board.

We understand that financial divestment is a complex and challenging process, particularly with managing indirect investments; however, we are committed to working closely with the University to explore all possible, and commercially responsible, avenues for ethical investment. We acknowledge that these requests may raise concerns about risk management and operational feasibility; nevertheless, we firmly believe that meaningful change is necessary and ultimately beneficial. Embracing change aligns with the University's values.⁹ (“**Appendix B**”) It is time for change, and we must embrace it.

Further, the UWSA urges the University to enhance its investment screening procedures. We recommend a thorough review of the IR Policy, incorporating suggestions from and the presence of the UWSA to ensure that the University's investments align with ethical and humanitarian standards. This collaborative approach will help us identify and mitigate any potential risks while staying true to our shared values. We suggest

⁹ University of Windsor. “Our Vision and Mission.” University of Windsor. Accessed May 30, 2024. <https://www.uwindsor.ca/48/our-mission>.



that the University of Windsor educate itself on the BDS movement¹⁰ and use the BDS guidelines when reviewing the University's investments. (“**Appendix C**”)

We also emphasize the importance of continuing and expanding support for Palestinian students on campus. This includes developing academic programs and providing resources to students affected by the crisis in Gaza. We understand the difficulties inherent in academic divestment and the policy and governance barriers involved, but we urge the University to avoid affiliations with institutions that support or fund the Israeli regime. Instead, we encourage focusing on academic projects that promote justice and peace, including the following:

- Establishing a centre for Palestinian studies;
- Bolstering Palestinian research and cultural understanding; and
- Sponsoring disenfranchised Palestinian students and professors to complete their studies and scholarship at the University of Windsor.

These requests fall in line with the University of Windsor's mission, vision, and values. We believe that by taking these steps, the University will not only uphold its commitment to ethical standards but also demonstrate leadership in the global movement for justice and human rights. We want to ensure that we make a significant impact on campus and continue to strive to stop all injustices. At the end of the day, we all serve the students, and the University's administration must work with us to address these critical issues. Change, while challenging, is not inherently negative; it is an opportunity for growth and improvement.

¹⁰ BDS Movement. Accessed May 30, 2024. <https://bdsmovement.net/>.



Please note that this letter represents the collective voice of our student body. It reflects our commitment to standing with the innocent Palestinian people and advocating for a just and peaceful resolution to the ongoing crisis.

We look forward to your positive response and collaboration in these critical efforts.

Sincerely,

The University of Windsor Students' Alliance



“APPENDIX A”

UWSA BDS Motion

The purpose of this resolution is to provide tangible actions through which the UWSA can adopt the BDS movement for the following reasons:

WHEREAS, various international human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch (2021) and Amnesty International (2022) have investigated Israel for its multiple violations on international law and human rights abuse, identifying the State of Israel as a settler-colonial apartheid state;

WHEREAS, the United Nations Security Council, through Resolution 2334 in 2016, has unequivocally stated that Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories constitute a severe breach of international law, infringing upon Palestinian human rights;

WHEREAS, the United Nations has compiled a database of companies that are contributing to the sustainability and expansion of these settlements that have been deemed illegal under international law;

WHEREAS, reports indicate that during the 100-day period from October 7th 2023 to January 15th 2024, there were over 24,000 fatalities, more than 60,000 individuals were injured, and over 2 million people facing restrictions on access to essential services such as food, electricity, sanitation, and humanitarian aid, with these circumstances persisting to date;

WHEREAS, the repercussions of the State of Israel’s actions have had a direct impact on students, families, and broader community associated with the University of Windsor;



WHEREAS the UWSA represents all full-time undergraduate students on all major governing bodies and committees of the University of Windsor, with a mission statement to advocate, represent, and support students;

WHEREAS the UWSA has invoked its Issues Policy (By-law 10.3), through which the UWSA issued a statement standing in solidarity with the People of Palestine;

WHEREAS the UWSA Membership has expressed a vested interest in the UWSA supporting Palestine and Palestinian students, as evidenced by the feedback on the UWSA's initial neutral statement released on October 18, 2023, the overwhelming support on UWSA's revised statement published on October 27, 2023 in support of the Palestinian people, and the circulated petition on March 11, 2024 for BDS on-campus;

WHEREAS the University of Toronto's Student Union (UTSU), Concordia Student Union (CSU), Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU), Alma Mater Society of the University of British Columbia Vancouver (AMS), and Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) have issued statements endorsing the Boycott, Divest, Sanction (BDS) movement and Palestine in 2022—joining a list of 26 Canadian student Unions and Associations endorsing BDS since 2012.

Therefore, **BIRT** the UWSA shall send a letter of support to the University of Windsor administration, Senate and the Board of Governors urging academic and financial divestment from the government of Israel, its products and in keeping in line with their Responsible Investment Policy (March 2023);



BIRT the UWSA shall recognize anti-Palestinian racism as a class of discrimination and take action to support students' rights and freedoms of speech, expression, association, and protest along with advocating for academic research speaking on and about Palestine;

BIRT the UWSA shall author a statement re-affirming their solidarity with Palestinian students each year which shall be published subject to the approval of its Board of Directors;

BIRT the UWSA shall do everything that is commercially reasonable to the organization to ensure that UWSA does not support or profit from companies that support or profit from Israeli apartheid and operate on occupied Palestinian lands, in line with global BDS guidelines, and the University of Windsor's Responsible Investment Policy (March 2023). This will exclude any existing agreements and any such agreement renewals;

BIRT the UWSA shall establish a BDS committee under its policies, led by Palestinian voices to hold the UWSA accountable by acting as an advisory sounding board in solidarity with the BDS cause and with representation from prominent Palestinian solidarity student groups on campus (e.g. PSG). The UWSA shall conduct a review of its investments annually to present and review with the BDS Committee and present updates at the Annual General Meeting;

BIRT the UWSA shall ensure that current investments align with ethical investing standards and the objectives of the BDS movement to the fullest extent possible; and

BIRT the UWSA shall not establish new relationships with the Big Five Canadian Banks (RBC, Scotiabank, CIBC, TD and BMO). This entails not allowing any of the aforementioned banks from hosting, cohosting or sponsoring student union events. The UWSA shall endeavour to establish relationships with credit unions and financial institutions rooted in our local community.



This will exclude any existing agreements and any such agreement renewals and will also exclude UWSA ratified student groups.



“Appendix B” University’s Values



University of Windsor > About the University > Our Vision and Mission

Our Vision and Mission

Our Mission

To empower positive change through regionally and globally engaged inquiry, learning, scholarship, creation, and research.

Our Vision

As a locally engaged, globally connected institution, the University of Windsor will enable people to transform their circumstances. As partners, leaders, and learners, we will engage in impactful research, relevant teaching, creative endeavours, and inclusive relationship building to foster positive change.

Our Values

Academic Excellence:

We strive for academic excellence in teaching, learning, research, scholarship, and creative activity. We encourage innovation and collaboration with local and global communities. Diverse ways of knowing, knowledge traditions, and ways of creating and disseminating knowledge enhance the richness of our academic pursuits.

Action on Indigenization, Truth, and Reconciliation

We have a responsibility to Indigenize and decolonize the University, and to make it a place where Indigenous staff, students, faculty, and community members feel supported, and where the impacts of intergenerational traumas are addressed. There is much to learn from Indigenous teachings and traditions and integrating Indigenous knowledge and values will improve our institution for everyone.

Community Impact

We are an anchor institution in our region, with the privilege and responsibility of living, learning, working, and creating partnerships here. We bring global perspectives, emerging knowledge, and leadership to the table as we address regional challenges together. Our impact is greatest when we all learn together.

Engagement with Students

We strive to be a place where all learners feel welcome, are included, and can succeed, and where students, staff, faculty, and communities work together to foster meaningful engagement and experiences. This requires us to ensure the student voice and aspirations are heard, and that we respond to those voices with compassion, care, and flexibility.

Environmental Sustainability

We are committed to working with on- and off-campus communities to ensure that climate action and environmental sustainability are integral to decision making. We are on a journey to greater sustainability, through innovation, reciprocal partnership, collaborative action, and shared learning and knowledge.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Decolonizing the University, ensuring justice, and embedding anti-oppression and anti-racism in our institution requires long-term care and commitment. An equity focus must be engrained in all our decision making in order to address the policies and practices that have oppressed and stigmatized members of our communities for too long.

Openness to Change

We have shown that we can adapt and be agile when necessary. Our challenge now is to translate temporary adaptations into sustained transformative evolution of the institution. Nimbleness, adaptability, creativity, and flexibility are institutional muscles we need to grow and develop. As an institution we need to evolve beyond the way we’ve always done things, be willing to take calculated risks, and continuously learn from our actions.

Prioritizing People

Our people are the foundation of all that we do. We are committed to becoming an institution that increasingly and consistently operates from a place of care, compassion, respect, humility, and empathy.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is founded on accountability, transparency, honesty, and integrity. It requires us to thoughtfully measure and report our progress. Where we miss the mark, we will acknowledge it, learn from our missteps, and use what we learn to inform future approaches. As a public institution, we are accountable for our stewardship of public funds: financial sustainability is critical to fulfilling our mission.



“Appendix C”

BDS—An Overview

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) is a Palestinian-led movement for freedom, justice, and equality. BDS upholds the simple principle that Palestinians are entitled to the same rights as the rest of humanity.

Israel is occupying and colonising Palestinian land, discriminating against Palestinian citizens of Israel and denying Palestinian refugees the right to return to their homes. Inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement, the BDS call urges action to pressure Israel to comply with international law.

BDS is now a vibrant global movement made up of unions, academic associations, churches and grassroots movements across the world. Since its launch in 2005, BDS is having a major impact and is effectively challenging international support for Israeli apartheid and settler-colonialism.

Ongoing Injustice

Since 1948, Israel has denied Palestinians their fundamental rights and has refused to comply with international law.

Israel maintains a regime of settler colonialism, apartheid and occupation over the Palestinian people. This is only possible because of international support. Governments fail to hold Israel to account, while corporations and institutions across the world help Israel to oppress Palestinians.

Because those in power refuse to act to stop this injustice, Palestinian civil society has called for a global citizens’ response of solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice and equality.

What are Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions?

Boycotts involve withdrawing support from Israel’s apartheid regime, complicit Israeli sporting, cultural and academic institutions, and from all Israeli and international companies engaged in violations of Palestinian human rights.

Divestment campaigns urge banks, local councils, churches, pension funds and universities to withdraw investments from the State of Israel and all Israeli and international companies that sustain Israeli apartheid.



Sanctions campaigns pressure governments to fulfil their legal obligations to end Israeli apartheid, and not aid or assist its maintenance, by banning business with illegal Israeli settlements, ending military trade and free-trade agreements, as well as suspending Israel's membership in international forums such as UN bodies and FIFA.

The Call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions

In 2005, Palestinian civil society organizations called for boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) as a form of non-violent pressure on Israel.

The BDS movement was launched by 170 Palestinian unions, refugee networks, women's organisations, professional associations, popular resistance committees and other Palestinian civil society bodies.

Inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement, the Palestinian BDS call urges nonviolent pressure on Israel until it complies with international law by meeting three demands:

1. Ending its occupation and colonization of all arab lands and dismantling the Wall
 - a. International law recognizes the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Syrian Golan Heights as occupied by Israel. As part of its military occupation, Israel steals land and forces Palestinians into ghettos, surrounded by checkpoints, settlements and watchtowers and an illegal apartheid Wall. Israel has imposed a medieval siege on Gaza, turning it into the largest open-air prison in the world. Israel also regularly carries out large-scale assaults on Gaza that are widely condemned as constituting war crimes and crimes against humanity.
2. Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality
 - a. One-fifth of Israel's citizens are Palestinians who remained inside the armistice lines after 1948. They are subjected to a system of racial discrimination enshrined in more than 50 laws that impact every aspect of their lives. The Israeli government continues to forcibly displace Palestinian communities in Israel from their land. Israeli leaders routinely and openly incite racial violence against them.
3. Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their home and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194
 - a. Since its violent establishment in 1948 through the ethnic cleansing of more than half of the indigenous people of Palestine, Israel has set out to control as much land and uproot as many Palestinians as it can. As a result of this systematic forced displacement, there are now more than 7.25 million Palestinian refugees. They are denied their right to return to their homes simply because they are not Jewish.

BDS is an inclusive, anti-racist human rights movement that is opposed on principle to all forms of discrimination, including antisemitism and Islamophobia.



Growing Impact

Thanks to strategic campaigning, the impact of the BDS movement is increasing substantially. Examples of direct and indirect BDS impacts include:

- BDS aims to end international support for Israeli violations of international law by forcing companies, institutions and governments to change their policies. As Israeli companies and institutions become isolated, Israel will find it more difficult to oppress Palestinians.
- BDS campaigns also raise awareness about how Israel oppresses the Palestinian people.
- The growth and success of the BDS movement sends a clear message to Palestinians and to world governments that people around the world are increasingly unwilling to accept Israel's oppression of Palestinians.

Companies to Avoid

[Starbucks](#)

Starbucks claims to be neutral but has taken legal action against its workers union for expressing solidarity with Palestine. It profits from 1900 stores in the Middle East and North Africa, and had \$36 billion annual revenue in 2023, higher than the GDP of 91 countries. We call on Starbucks to use its vast influence to advocate for an end to the Israeli Occupation. Instead, Howard Schultz, the founder and largest private owner of Starbucks stock invests heavily in Israel's economy, including a recent investment in cybersecurity startup Wiz. This investment underscores Schultz's commitment to Israel's economic growth with the effect of normalizing the occupation of Palestine.

[Disney](#)

Disney made an official announcement condemning attacks on Israel and pledging \$2 million and further initiatives in support, while making no mention of the brutal Occupation of Palestine. Disney also uses Israeli company Delta Galil Industries for manufacturing its branded clothing. This direct involvement in the Israeli economy strengthens its brutal policies towards the Palestinians, normalizes the Occupation, and shows that Disney puts profits over justice and equality.

[McDonalds](#)

McDonalds has a large presence in Israel with 161 franchise locations who supplied free food for IOF soldiers. The company has stated that the action of this franchisee does not represent its



neutral position. McDonalds profits from 9000 stores in Muslim majority countries in Asia and the Middle East, and had \$25 billion annual revenue in 2023, higher than the GDP of 82 countries.

[Coca Cola](#)

Coca Cola operates a factory in the illegal Israeli settlement of Atarot, which is built on stolen Palestinian land in violation of international law. This direct involvement in the Israeli economy strengthens its brutal policies towards the Palestinians, normalizes the Occupation, and shows that Coca Cola puts profits over justice and equality. Coca Cola annual revenue for 2023 was \$45.75 billion, higher than the GDP of 99 countries.

[Tim Hortons](#)

RBI owns Burger King, Tim Hortons, and Popeyes. RBI stock is 17.6% of the holdings of Zionist billionaire Bill Ackman's investment fund Pershing Square Capital. Ackman has repeatedly used his wealth to intimidate those with less power, including Harvard pro-Palestinian student activists and faculty. Another 18.1% of Ackman's portfolio consists of Chipotle stock. Over 30% of his assets are in these four brands.

[Sabra](#)

Nestle owns a controlling stake in Israeli food manufacturer Osem. This direct involvement in the Israeli economy strengthens its brutal policies towards the Palestinians, normalizes the Occupation, and shows that Nestle puts profits over justice and equality. Nestle's annual revenue in 2023 was \$104.6 billion, higher than the GDP of 122 countries.