

## **SJP West Letter of Support for the UC Graduate Union's BDS Vote**

On July 29, 2014, the Joint Council of the UAW-2865, the union which represents roughly 13,000 graduate students across the University of California, wrote to express its solidarity with the Palestinian people and to endorse the movement for Boycotts, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) that intends to cut ties with institutions and corporations which enable or profit from Israel's system of occupation and apartheid. Thus it is with great pride that SJP-West writes to express the thanks, encouragement, and support for the UAW 2865 shared by our 22+ member organizations across the West Coast.

SJP-West is an umbrella organization that consists of SJP chapters all across California. It serves as a support group to coordinate organizing and activism among these chapters. With the support of SJP– West, divestment campaigns have increased within the UC system and at the California State University network. SJP-West also makes a point to extend solidarity to any campaign, entity, or individual dedicated to advancing human rights and social justice, both locally and globally. For this reason, SJP-West stands alongside the student workers of UAW 2865 in its initiative to support boycott and divestment and applauds their courageous stance at a critical moment, in which Palestine solidarity is censored and repressed in public academic institutions.

We commend the student workers of UAW 2865 for proposing this initiative in support of justice, anti-oppression, and human rights – keeping the history of union work consistent and always at the forefront of liberation. We commend the student workers for using their voices in academia to challenge the status quo and leverage their positions as educators by teaching and learning about unique histories and social issues around the world. We commend the student workers for recognizing and acting to resist and dismantle the structural racism and settler-colonialism that has permeated transnationally, including the United States and Palestine. We support this letter's message to advocate for the BDS movement and the self-determination of Palestinians and feel that the Joint Council's position has created a more justice-centered, safe and inclusive climate for all our campuses.

We encourage all graduate students of the University of California (UC) system who are members of UAW 2865 to vote yes in support of divesting the UC and UAW from corporations that profit from and equip the ongoing occupation, settler-colonialism, and human rights violations committed by Israel, along with other injustices internationally. These companies include:

- Caterpillar, whose bulldozers are used to illegally demolish Palestinian homes in order for illegal settlements to be built<sup>1</sup>;
- Hewlett-Packard, whose electronic services are used in checkpoints to limit Palestinians freedom of movement and it also provides products and services to the Department of Homeland Security here in the U.S. for enhanced immigration status checks. The company also administers an ID system used to administer residency in occupied East Jerusalem<sup>2</sup>;
- Cemex, who sells cement used to build the wall and used in illegal settlements in the West Bank<sup>3</sup>
- CRH, who sells cement used in the construction of the wall and maintains quarries that illegally mine West Bank minerals for sale in Israel.<sup>4</sup>
- Boeing, General Electric, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon,<sup>5</sup> Northrup Grumman,<sup>6</sup> General Dynamics<sup>7</sup> and United Technologies<sup>8</sup> all of which sell military equipment used in attacks on civilians in the Gaza Strip, described by major human rights organizations and international observers as gross violations of international law and human rights.<sup>9</sup>

The request is simple – the membership of UAW 2865 should not be complicit in any atrocities or human rights violations anywhere. By voting yes on this initiative, members will have the power to voice an end to complicity and thereby, wash their hands from the systems of violence and apartheid presently inflicted upon the Palestinian people. Voting no or not voting at all translates into the acceptance of the UC system’s investments in companies that gain capital from human rights violations and

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<sup>1</sup> See reports by [Who Profits](#); Amnesty International [“Israel and the Occupied Territories: Under the Rubble: House Demolition and Destruction of Land and Property.”](#) and Human Rights Watch: [“Razing Rafah: Mass Home Demolitions in the Gaza Strip.”](#)

<sup>2</sup> See [Who Profits’ report](#); [Global Exchange’s report on HP](#), which includes a section on its services to the prison and immigration systems in the United States

<sup>3</sup> See [Who Profits report on Cemex](#)

<sup>4</sup> See [Project Clean Hands’ report on Cement Roadstone Holdings](#) and [Who Profits report on Cement Roadstone Holdings](#)

<sup>5</sup> Amnesty International’s report [“Fuelling Conflict: Foreign Arms Supplies to Israel/Gaza”](#), details arms sales made by Boeing, General Electric, Lockheed Martin, and Raytheon. Further citations attached to those companies supplement this report. United Technologies’ arms sales are documented here.

<sup>6</sup> See Northrop Grumman’s sales of [missile systems](#), [gunships](#), and services for [F-16](#) fighter jets.

<sup>7</sup> [See the AFSC’s report on arms sales to Israel](#), citing General Dynamics provision of weapons (such as the F-16) used in attacks on civilians.

<sup>8</sup> United Technologies renders [services to the Israeli military](#) through its aviation subsidiaries, Pratt and Whitney and Sikorsky, which manufacture engines used in F-15s and F-16s, and Blackhawk helicopters, respectively.

<sup>9</sup> See for example, See: Amnesty International’s [“Operation ‘Cast Lead’: 22 Days of Death and Destruction”](#), Human Rights Watch’s [“Israel: In-Depth Look at Gaza School Attacks”](#), and Human Rights Watch’s, [“Gaza: Airstrikes Violated Laws of War”](#)

directly contradicts the historical mandate of the union as a social justice advocacy institution.

Furthermore, we encourage all members of the UAW to also support the academic boycott of universities and other academic institutions that participate in and further systematic oppression of the Palestinian people. Israeli universities which are built on illegally confiscated Palestinian land, which endorse and subsidize the Israeli military, which discriminate against and exclude Palestinian students, and which censor free speech critical of the Israeli government on their campuses are not fit for collaboration. However, as USACBI and other institutions which participate in the academic boycott make clear, this measure only targets institutions, not individuals, and we encourage the ongoing efforts to build ties and relationships with Israeli scholars who work in solidarity with Palestinian liberation.

SJP-West believes that as a collective, we can make a difference through the institutions that we are part of. We need to carry on the legacy of those before us who fought tirelessly, as union organizers and members should know from the beginnings of the labor movement. We cannot be stagnant; we cannot be comfortable with our complicity. Vote yes. Vote for justice.