

Divest! Don't Arrest: The People's Referendum

Background: The TAHRIR Coalition, composed of 80+ student organizations, in solidarity with the international movement for Palestinian liberation and building on decades of student activism for divestment, officially launches **The Divest! Don't Arrest People's Referendum, open to all students, faculty, staff, and hourly workers** from the University of Michigan system (including the Dearborn, Flint, and Ann Arbor campuses), which the Board of Regents jointly governs.

Context: **For more than seven decades, we have witnessed Israel's persistent ethnic cleansing, land expropriation, and systematic denial of Palestinian rights, increasingly emboldened by support from the U.S. government.** The Israeli bombardment and complete siege of the open-air prison of Gaza for over 130 days has killed over 30,000 Palestinians—with over 12,000 being children. The International Court of Justice recognized there is plausible evidence that Israel is engaging in genocide, and is also examining the very legality of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. As the collective punishment and massacre of Gazans continues, and as Gaza's city blocks and infrastructures collapse to rubble, the occupied West Bank has been experiencing increased pogroms and assassinations by Israeli settlers and soldiers. Since 2005, Palestinian civil society has called for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions as a non-violent tactic to end Israeli impunity of ongoing human rights abuses, land seizure, and apartheid.

Whereas, the University of Michigan's endowment, the third largest public endowment in the country currently valued at \$18 billion, invests in numerous companies investing in and/or profiting from this genocide:

- Student FOIA requests have revealed previous direct investments in Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and other companies sustaining Israel's war machine;
- The University commits over \$6 billion to investment managers who have profited from investments in Israeli companies and/or military contractors;
- Among these indirect investments are drone manufacturers like Skydio, which has sent more than 100 drones to the Israeli military; military contractors like Cobham and Ultra Electronics, which participate in the construction of F-35 warplanes used to bombard Gazan civilians; Israeli spyware firms like Oosto, which produces facial recognition software to surveil Palestinians at checkpoints in the West Bank; and Israeli prisons surveillance company Attenti, which also contracts with the Michigan Department of Corrections to create monitoring tools for those on parole;
- Financial disclosures show that the University held \$36.9 million in Israeli shekel forwards in 2022 and may have held shekels and shekel derivatives in other years;¹

¹ TAHRIR Coalition, "[The University Endowment and Genocide in Gaza: An investigation of the University of Michigan Endowment.](#)"

Whereas, the U-M Board of Regents has ignored calls for divestment for over 20 years:

- In 2002, Students Allied for Freedom and Equality (SAFE) began calling for divestment from Israel;²
- In 2017, Central Student Government voted affirmatively to call for U-M to form an ad hoc committee group to investigate divestment from companies involved in human rights violations against the Palestinian people;³
- On January 30th, 2024, the U-M Faculty Senate Assembly voted affirmatively to call for the Board of Regents to divest U-M holdings from companies that invest in the ongoing war in Gaza;⁴

Whereas, U-M has sought to shield the endowment and its ties to Israel from public view:

- In the early 2000s, at the behest of the Investment Office, U-M successfully pushed for exemptions from state transparency laws that would allow it to hide its dealings with investment managers;⁵
- The University has denied FOIA requests that U-M Administrators had previously instructed students to file in order to obtain further information about the University's endowment;
- U-M leaders have ignored the University's Faculty Senate Assembly resolution calling for the University "to assess and publicize the financial investments by the University in the State of Israel,"⁶

Whereas, U-M administrators have suppressed and criminalized pro-Palestinian voices and activism:

- On November 30, U-M administrators undemocratically canceled AR-025, a Central Student Government resolution that called for divestment from Israel, with President Santo Ono, declaring students would be "disallowed" from voting on this resolution again;⁷
- Pro-Palestinian students have been villainized through violent doxxing efforts incited by campus-based opposition and enabled by the complicity of the U-M administration;⁸
- Campus police and over 15 police agencies aggressively responded to a peaceful student sit-in during public hours at the Ruthven Administration Building on November 17, through the use of physical violence and mass arrests of 41 students during the action;

² *Michigan Daily*, "[Students demand new 'U' divestment](#)"; Fadi Kiblawi, "[Activist Manifesto: Divest from Israeli Apartheid](#)"

³ Central Student Government 2017 [Assembly Resolution 7-019](#).

⁴ *Michigan Daily*, "[Senate Assembly passes UMich divestment resolution](#)"

⁵ Rafael Castilla and William Hodgeson, "[The Evolution of Investing at the University of Michigan 1817-2016](#)," pp50-51; "[Confidential Research and Investment Information Act](#)," §390.1554a.

⁶ [U-M Faculty Senate Assembly minutes, November 13, 2023](#).

⁷ *Michigan Daily*, "[UMich cancels CSG voting on controversial Israel-Hamas war resolutions](#)"; "[U-M statement regarding CSG resolutions and ongoing campus tensions](#)"; Timothy G. Lynch, "[Breach of CSG election integrity](#)"

⁸ "[Demand University of Michigan Protect Pro-Palestine Students from Doxxing and Defamation](#)"

- Since November, two more students have been arrested and campus police have increased intimidation tactics and harassment of students while on campus;⁹
- Since November 17, campus police have requested dozens of warrants against students, some of which are felony charges;

Whereas, these actions are in contradiction with President Santa Ono’s stated support for a non-police, unarmed response program at the University of Michigan;¹⁰

Be it resolved that the campus community, consisting of staff, faculty, and students of all three campuses, demand U-M’s immediate divestment from a) any and all companies presently, or in the future, investing in and/or profiting from the human rights violations committed by Israel and/or aiding in the apartheid system maintained against Palestinians, b) funds invested in such companies, and c) the shekel and shekel derivatives.

Be it further resolved that the campus community, consisting of staff, faculty, and students of all three campuses, call on the U-M Board of Regents to require the University Office of Investments to release records of all investments made every fiscal quarter.

Be it further resolved that the campus community, consisting of staff, faculty, and students of all three campuses, call on the U-M Board of Regents to request Washtenaw County Prosecutor Eli Savit drop all charges against pro-Palestine student protestors.

Ballot language: Do you approve the Divest! Don’t Arrest Referendum, which calls for the U-M Board of Regents to immediately 1) divest from a) any and all companies presently, or in the future, investing in and/or profiting from the human rights violations committed by Israel and/or aiding in the apartheid system maintained against Palestinians, b) funds invested in such companies, and c) the shekel and shekel derivatives; 2) release transparent records on all University investments; and 3) drop the charges against pro-Palestine student protestors?

Yes

No

Abstain

⁹ [“TAHRIR Coalition denounces police intimidation and repression at UM”](#)

¹⁰ *University Record*, [“President offers support for non-police emergency response program”](#)