

ACCRIP Meeting November 12, 2019

Attendance:

Annie Phan
Chi-Ming Hai
Camille Harley
Christina Fournier
Fulvio Domini
Lisa Di Carlo
Anne Sharp
Peter Levine

Jewish Students Opposition to Divestment

- Divest proposal does not correct ACCRIP's definition of social harm
- Clause 1G of ACCRIP charter
- Needs more than unilateral condemnation of Israel
- Palestinian blockade will not be changed by Brown's divestment
- Terrorist groups (Palestinian group Hamas) have wreaked havoc (rockets) on Israel in Gaza
 - Students are trying to prove that this conflict causes social harm on both sides
- Separation wall
 - Israelis see the fence as a **necessary security measure**
 - Has decreased the Israeli deaths due to terror attacks
 - While it causes social harm to Palestinians, we cannot expect that divestment will do anything

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, BDS

- Promotes various forms of boycott against Israel until it meets what the campaign describes as Israel's obligations under international law (withdrawal from the occupied territories, removal of the separation barrier in the West Bank, full equality for Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel, and helping Palestinian refugees)
- However, presenters claim that their goal is to **eliminate Israel in Palestine**
 - Palestine will never accept any part of Israel
- BDS and Brown's Divest movement/referendum are viewed as one and the same by the media

Why is this (and BDS) harmful?

1. BDS engages in rhetoric that demonizes Israel
 - BDS engages in self-serving narrative that overlook the struggles of Palestinians
 - Believes University stance is to foster conversation that looks at both perspectives
 - Divestment takes away the nuance of this conversation and only looks at the Palestinian side
2. BDS strengthens the Israel right
- a. Israeli extremists have used BDS sentiment to sow fear
3. Legitimizes and fosters a community of Anti-Semitism
- . Reminiscent of Nazi motto "don't buy from Jews"

- a. Hard to separate the concept of “don’t buy from Jews” and “don’t buy from Israel” because Israel has the largest proportion of Jews in the world
- b. European nations (UK, Germany) have seen BDS as anti-Semitic
- c. Survey of American Jews: 82% of Jews view BDS as anti-Semitic
 - BDS leads to harassment of hostility towards Jews
 - 70% increase in Israel-related anti-Semitic harassment
 - Efforts to exclude pro-Israel people from talks of race/genocide doubles
 - Brown should not support any movement that wants to close academic discussion on this topic, only supports the Palestinian side, toes the line with anti-Semitic

Brown referendum: was manipulative wording

- Talked about “complicit in human rights abuses”
- Results of this referendum is not representative of Brown community
 - Only 27.5% of all undergrads voted yes

Divesting would be financially irresponsible

- Divesting would not actually affect the companies
 - They are giant companies
 - If Brown were to sell stocks, they would be bought up on the secondary market → no affect on their share price
- Runs the risk of hurting returns on Brown’s endowment
 - 32% is for financial aid/fellowships/prizes
 - 21% to professorships

Solutions for peace

- Engage in dialogue between our communities at Brown to build goodwill
- Supporting organizations that bring Israelis and Palestinians together
 - Paris center for peace
 - Seeds for Peace

Committee Questions:

Q: AJC survey - what is the response rate?

A: 27.8%, but treated as a fairly authoritative reflection on Jewish sentiment.

Pushback: The leader of BDS means that he does not want to live in a state where he is not treated as an equal citizen with the right to choose his religion, not that he is only anti-Israel

Q: If this case is not tied with BDS, does your stance on divestment change?

A: Should not view these two things in isolation. He thinks divestment is deeply conducted to BDS (anti-Semitism) and will not correct social harm - interplay of these two factors

- Will give BDS an advertising platform

Audience pushback

- Gave an example of extreme human rights violation in Israel

- The Jewish presentation says that Palestinian groups (Hamas) have been inflicting harm on Israelis
- But her cousin was not part of Hamas, he was an innocent civilian
- Should not justify Israeli treatment of Palestinians

Next steps

- Discuss both divestment and anti-divestment presentations
- Tentative initial vote to see if this issue constitutes social harm