

# Divest from Apartheid

## An Explainer

East Bay Democratic Socialists of America  
2024



# Theory of Change

The East Bay Democratic Socialists of America Divest From Apartheid campaign team is on a mission with the following theory of change:

**1** **Push East Bay governmental bodies to vote** to take our money out of companies that support or enable Israel's system of apartheid;

As governmental bodies, universities, unions, and other institutions divest, these companies will be forced to cut ties with the Israeli war machine under mounting financial pressure;

**3** Without funding from business partners, **the Israeli war machine won't be able to continue its genocide in Gaza** or to operate its apartheid system which imposes the brutality of segregation on Palestinians.

**East Bay demands  
that our cities and  
counties Divest  
From Apartheid.**

**Sign the petition.**

***EBDSA.US/BAD***



# Questions

- 1** What is the goal of East Bay DSA's Divest From Apartheid campaign?
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- 6** What does any of this have to do with me?
- 7** If our city/county employer divested, would that make them less financially stable and result in me losing my job or hours or taking a pay cut or less jobs for workers overall?
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- 9** When my city/county divests from apartheid, will it then reinvest in community needs?
- 10** Would divesting from apartheid or the US military industrial complex hurt US workers?
- 11** Will divestment at the local level even make a difference?
- 12** Genocide is obviously bad, but I honestly care more about

catastrophic climate change. The world is burning, and it's going to take us all down with it. Why should I care about this as much?

- 13** Won't divestment hurt workers in Israel? As union members, how could we support that?
- 14** Why is Palestine a workers' issue? Why should I care about what's going on overseas thousands of miles away?
- 15** My union hasn't pledged to divest yet. How is my union connected to Israel's crimes, and why is it important for our union to divest?
- 16** I've heard about Bay Area Divest!. How is DFA different?
- 17** But Hamas...
- 18** But what about the conflicts in the Congo, Sudan, Haiti, and elsewhere? Why don't you care about those?

## Question 1

# 1. What is the goal of East Bay DSA's Divest From Apartheid campaign?

**Our immediate and principle goal is to help end Israel's genocide, occupation, and system of apartheid by way of divestment.** We also want to play our part in transforming the Israeli ethnostate into a real secular democracy where everyone is allowed a voice and afforded liberty regardless of their religion, race, or ethnicity. To this day, Israel maintains a merciless decades-long siege and blockade on Gaza and occupies the West Bank and East Jerusalem, where it imposes a **brutal apartheid system of segregation**. Within the 1948 borders (or Israel proper), Israel affords far more rights to and treats more humanely Jewish Israelis than Arab residents. This is an abomination we refuse to support as taxpayers and people of conscience.

Furthermore, we aim to take part in a larger cultural awakening whereby we challenge the expectation that each year our federal government will waste an astronomical amount of public resources on warmongering abroad. Those funds should be used to heal, school, and house us. Our public resources should be used to help our communities thrive, not to tear down other people's homes. Period.

## Question 2

# 2. What is divestment?

In this context, divestment is the act of pressuring governments, individual investors, and corporations into pulling invested money out of another government that does things people find objectionable or companies that enable that government to act reprehensibly in order to force the government into correcting its behavior or central precepts.

**Divestment has long been used as a method of challenging the negative behaviors of tyrannical governments and other corporate evildoers, such as the fossil fuel and tobacco industries.** For example, the international community participated in a global divestment campaign to challenge the apartheid government of South Africa.

## Question 3

# 3. Is divestment the same thing as BDS?

BDS stands for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions, so divestment is the "D" in BDS.

## Question 4

# 4. Is divesting from Israel anti-semitic?

No. Divestment campaigns focus on the Israeli state because of its responsibility for serious violations of international law. Divestment campaigns do this by targeting the companies and institutions that participate in and are complicit in these Israeli violations. **Divestment campaigns do not boycott or campaign against any individual or group simply because they are Jewish.** Many Jewish students, academics, intellectuals, LGBTQ advocates, and others, as well as a growing number of Jewish-Israelis, oppose the Israeli ethnostate and support and advocate for BDS or divestment.

In the late 20th century, people around the globe led divestment campaigns to pressure the government of South Africa to end apartheid. Those campaigns were not hateful towards the Afrikaners population but sought freedom, justice and equality for all South Africans. Similarly, our divestment campaigns are in support of freedom, justice, and equality for Palestinians and are led by and supported by many Jewish people.

## Question 5

# 5. Which companies do our local governments invest in that are complicit in the persecution of the Palestinian people?

Different local governments in our county invest in various companies that have a track record of supporting Israel's occupation and system of apartheid.

One company that local governments commonly invest in is Caterpillar, or CAT. CAT sells bulldozers that are retrofitted and armored and then used by the Israeli state to bulldoze the homes of Palestinians, leaving them homeless and then allowing Israelis to replace them. These bulldozers are also used to destroy infrastructure in Palestinian communities, to hurl boulders at Palestinians, and to run over and murder Palestinians and their allies. In 2003, a CAT bulldozer ran over and killed Rachel Corrie, a US citizen and SEIU union member, while she tried to prevent a CAT bulldozer from demolishing the home of a Palestinian family in Gaza.

Some local governments also invest in weapons manufacturers like Lockheed Martin. Such companies manufacture the bombs, weapons, fighter jets, and other military hardware and technologies that have terrorized so much of the world and which have destroyed Gaza and enabled the genocide on its people.

These are just two examples of many negative investments.

## Question 6

# 6. What does any of this have to do with me?

We all pay taxes to all levels of government, and some of that money is invested in companies that make weapons and machines of war or that support Israel's active genocide in Gaza, its system of apartheid against Palestinians, and its decades-long occupation of Palestinian land.

Israel will not stop oppressing Palestinians and occupying their land on its own, and the US will not stop materially facilitating Israel's crimes against Palestinians. Israel has occupied Palestinian lands since 1967, despite human rights organizations, UN agencies, and now the International Court of Justice (ICJ) deeming the occupation illegal under international law. Israel ignored decrees issued by the ICJ earlier this year ordering Israel to take all measures within its power to prevent violation of international law in its vicious assault on Gaza, and it ignored a resolution issued by the UN Security Council endorsing a temporary ceasefire. Despite occasional empty words showing some sort of acknowledgment of human suffering, our US government has continued to provide Israel with billions of dollars in military aid and to obstruct or delay any attempt to reach a diplomatic resolution to the genocide.

The violence our tax dollars enable against Palestinians makes its way back to the US to terrorize our black, brown, and overpoliced communities directly. **Thousands of US law enforcement personnel** receive training on Israel's tactics and expertise in state violence. Israel "field tests" these methods on Palestinians. As long as our tax dollars are being sent to prop

up a brutal occupation force in Israel, our communities will continue to suffer from the **heavy-handed** policing methods that those Israeli Occupation Forces export back to the United States.

The Israeli regime is a huge sink of our tax dollars from all levels. **The US has given Israel over \$300 billion in aid since 1946. Let's imagine a world where our federal government puts \$300 billion to subsidizing higher education or healthcare in the US rather than subsidizing the crimes of an oppressive rogue country that also trains police to further brutalize our communities.** It is up to us as residents of the nation that is most responsible for enabling Israel's genocide and illegal occupation to help stop it. Levying economic pressure through divestment is a powerful way for us to do that.

## Question 7

# 7. If our city/county employer divested, would that make them less financially stable and result in me losing my job?

That's very unlikely. Cities/counties typically cannot invest in stocks and are generally restricted to purchasing only the highest-rated corporate bonds. These assets are pretty much replaceable with other corporate bonds of equal stability, just from corporations that don't condone or support the regressive behavior of Israel. The point is to stop "rewarding bad behavior" via assets we can control as citizens. This is how people strategically put apartheid South Africa into disfavor, and we aim to do the same with apartheid Israel.

We feel the worry about how this might affect your and other workers' jobs in general, and it's a legitimate and compassionate concern. We faithfully don't think divestment makes things any more precarious than they already are under the control and whims of bosses. Capitalism forces us into a

posture of perpetual fear for our livelihoods, but it shouldn't force us to condone apartheid and genocide (although we'd like to undo capitalism, too). **It's the wealthy interests trying to starve public funds that lead to those outcomes, not a municipal/county divestment effort that would effectively just swap other investments in for the ones we drop.**

## Question 8

# 8. I'm confused. What's a corporate bond?

Corporations issue bonds to raise money. When investors—individuals, governments, other corporations, mutual funds, hedge funds—buy corporate bonds, investors are lending money to the corporation; in turn, the corporation pays interest once or twice a year to the investors for the life of the bond (often 20 years). For example, local governments that hold CAT bonds receive interest from CAT, increasing the funds available to pay for the local government's services. When a local government divests a corporate bond, they essentially get back their money on the loan to the corporation.

## Question 9

# 9. When my city/county divests from apartheid, will it then reinvest in community needs?

Unfortunately, as the current framework of local government finance exists under capitalism, the funds your city/county divests from apartheid will likely be reinvested in other companies. However, our vision within this framework is to continue pushing our local governments so that any investments they make with public funds are in companies that have a positive or at least neutral social impact, such as manufacturers of green technology. In the future, we look forward to our local governments investing in public banking, such as with the forthcoming **Public Bank of the East Bay**, which would allow us to divest from Wall Street banks and reinvest into our communities via mortgages, loans to small local businesses, and development of affordable social housing.

**We envision a world in which our local governments use all of our public funds to develop infrastructure, educate our children adequately, and provide us with universal access to healthcare and childcare.** If you share our vision, come organize with us.

## Question 10

# 10. Would divesting from apartheid or the US military industrial complex hurt US workers?

No. Divesting from apartheid and war helps prioritize the actual needs of US workers. The United States spends on the order of a trillion dollars a year on war and sends billions of dollars more to Israel to purchase weapons. In doing so, it further enriches corporate executives while slaughtering workers abroad and **contributing to catastrophic climate change**.

This is all while the same politicians send blank checks to the Pentagon and consistently claim poverty when it comes to meeting the actual needs of the working class. They leave us without access to affordable higher education, universal healthcare and childcare, affordable housing, modernized public transportation and infrastructure, and other things our communities actually need to thrive.

These same weapons and technologies that US weapons manufacturers sell to foreign governments end up back in the hands of law enforcement and are used to surveil and brutalize our local communities. They further militarize our police departments and sometimes even find their way into the hands of our children.

At the same time, our children are being robbed of their own futures, seeing more and more of their social entitlements whittled down to nothing in sacrifice to the war machine. Their own bodies also become feedstock for this unholy apparatus as careers for young people, especially in historically underserved/exploited communities, provide for steady recruitment into the armed forces. This is neither an equitable nor a sustainable economy.

If, instead of spending so much on war and destruction, the federal government invested in our communities as so many other countries do, workers would be better off. Our unions wouldn't have to bargain over things as fundamental as dignified healthcare and could attain even higher wages and better working conditions for their members. This would raise standards of living for all workers whether unionized or not, which is what **unions traditionally have done**.

While this particular divestment campaign focuses on local governments, we in East Bay DSA aim to play a part in a larger cultural awakening and a movement to make that happen. **In order for us to truly thrive as residents of the United States, our federal government needs to stop gifting our tax dollars to weapons manufacturers, genocidal nations like Israel, and companies that enable obscene acts of state terrorism in places like Palestine.** Instead, they must meet our most urgent needs and help our local governments further build our communities.

## Question 11

# 11. Will divestment at the local level even make a difference?

Companies fiercely protect their stock prices. If people, corporations, or governments start selling a company's stock or bonds because of a specific activity (like building weapons for Israel), that company may stop the activity to prevent further sell-offs. Stock analysts track these trends closely, and their reports can amplify the impact, causing even more people to sell out of fear of losing money. This ripple effect is how the stock market works, and we can use it to our advantage.

We were inspired to launch this campaign by organizers that pushed the City of Hayward to divest its funds from companies that profit from Israel's occupation of Palestine, and we are collaborating with those organizers in this campaign. Likewise, when we help the next city or county to divest, we will inspire others to do the same in their neighboring communities, and we will have developed the organizational capacity to push even bigger targets to divest!

Moreover, every divestment win keeps the spotlight on Israel's transgressions and builds global opposition to it. Israel's ethnic cleansing (mass displacement) of Palestinians began around 1948 and continues to this day. In 1967, Israel began its illegal occupation of Palestinian lands (Gaza and West Bank) onto which it had pushed displaced Palestinians

decades earlier. Israel has killed, imprisoned without charge, and subjected Palestinians to an apartheid regime of discrimination throughout the decades since 1948.

One of the most materially significant actions we can take to support Palestinians on the ground as they resist Israel's decades-long reign of impunity is to help remove the financial incentive corporations have to support it. Divestment is the way we do that. This is something the global community realized when it organized divestment campaigns in order to bring an end to apartheid in South Africa.

**On July 19, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the world's highest tribunal, declared that all States are "under an obligation not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by Israel's illegal presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory" and that "all the States parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention have the obligation, while respecting the Charter of the United Nations and international law, to ensure compliance by Israel with international humanitarian law as embodied in that Convention."**

With this recent ICJ advisory opinion, we must divest from Israel if we're to respect the authority of the rules-based international order, as overseen by the United Nations.

## Question 12

# 12. Genocide is obviously bad, but the world is burning, and climate change is going to take us all down with it. Why should I care about this?

This is a false dichotomy. Genocide, senseless war, and climate destruction are all important issues that are equally deserving of our attention. These crises are fundamentally interrelated, driven by the same destructive imperialist US and Israel alliance that shares a strategic geopolitical interest in the middle east, arguably centered on control of the region's fossil fuel resources. Fossil fuel companies like Chevron play a direct role in Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people and theft of Palestinian land.

For example, a Chevron subsidiary extracts gas off the shores of the Gaza Strip, exacerbating the Gaza blockade. The Oslo Accords, an agreement between Israel and representatives of the Palestinian people, grants Palestinians access to waters off the Gaza coast for fishing and economic activity. However, Israel regularly denies access to these waters and attacks

Palestinian fishermen due to the presence of natural gas infrastructure, leading to the collapse of Gaza's fishing industry. The Israel based Delek Group, a major player in the exploration and extraction of oil and gas off the Israeli coast, operates subsidiaries in West Bank settlements and supplies fuel to the Israeli military. As Israel's genocidal war turns towards Lebanon, it is worth noting that the coastal waters bordering Lebanon, Israel, Cyprus, Syria and Gaza potentially contain very large untapped natural gas and oil reserves.

In addition to the obvious humanitarian consequences, war itself is a massive climate catastrophe. The US military is the **world's single largest greenhouse gas emitter**, consuming more fossil fuels than most countries.

Israel's war on the people of Gaza and the destruction of their homes also imparts such catastrophic **environmental impacts**: the emissions from the first 120 days of Israel's assault exceeded the annual emissions of 26 individual countries. And the emissions associated with rebuilding Gaza are projected to be higher than the annual emissions of over 135 countries, equating them to those of Sweden and Portugal. That is to say: climate justice and the liberation of the Palestinian people (and all people) are inextricably intertwined.

Climate change presents us with an existential crisis. An ever-escalating regional war as provoked by Israel acting as a rogue state enabled by the US, both nuclear powers, also promises to bear catastrophic consequences. In focusing on climate change or regional conflict of such a magnitude, we must acknowledge and address the common regressive forces that push us further towards these interrelated catastrophes.

## Question 13

# 13. Won't divestment hurt workers in Israel? As union members, how could we support that?

In the long run, divestment would help all workers in Palestine and Israel, and here's why. Israel's war on Gaza is **destroying Israel's economy and hurting its workers**. Israeli workers lose their jobs, as they're expected to serve prolonged terms as reservists. Furthermore, Israel, which is dependent on a Palestinian workforce it tremendously exploits in industries such as construction, has significantly restricted access to that workforce since October 7, which also means that Palestinian workers are left without work. Israel's economic woes are largely a product of its own poor, catastrophic decision-making. No worker, neither Palestinian nor Israeli, is safe while the state of Israel continues its genocide on Gaza and the occupation of Palestine.

If we care about Israeli workers, though, we also must care about Palestinian workers. Since October 7, thousands of Palestinian workers have been murdered and displaced by Israel's war on Gaza. Furthermore, **Gaza's unemployment rate has catapulted to almost 80% and its GDP shrunk by 83.5% while the unemployment rate in the Occupied**

**West Bank has reached around 32% and its GDP shrunk by almost 33%.**

Israel also has **bombed buildings** associated with the Palestinian Trade Unions (PGFTU) multiple times. **Its assault on Gaza has destroyed the Palestinian economy and left tens of thousands of Palestinian workers jobless, and it has placed Palestinian workers in Israeli detention centers where they faced harsh conditions, with reports of physical assault, starvation and other forms of abuse.**

Even prior to October 7, 2023, Israel's brutal blockade and multiple wars on the Gaza Strip had left its economy as one of the most underdeveloped in the world. **In 2022, the unemployment rate in Gaza reached 45%, and the percentage of the population living below the national poverty line stood at 53%.**

Through divestment, we hope to help dismantle a hyper-militarized society which maintains an illegal occupation and apartheid system of segregation and heralds a new era of economic stability to the region. The status quo benefits no one. We must help change it.

## Question 14

# 14. Why is Palestine a workers' issue? Why should I care about what's going on overseas thousands of miles away?

The biggest bosses that hold sway over our government make their money off of war and imperialism. Cutting their lifeline in this way disempowers and weakens them, and it is strategic for us as socialists and unionists in the US.

**As socialists, we believe that what binds the great majority of the people across the world is the common vulnerability we suffer under capitalism and its masters: the bosses, the capitalists.** With this conviction in mind, our analysis is deeply engaged with knowing that the fate of workers anywhere will in time be the fate of workers everywhere, essentialized by the framework of solidarity. The careless abandon with which Palestinians are evicted from their homes tracks with the same essence that seniors here in the United States are evicted, serving the whims of a self-professed elite (try as they might to convince the rest of us that we can be among them). Solidarity is a rejection of this con.

As workers, we must stand in solidarity with all the rest, especially the most oppressed among us. **The Palestinian Trade Unions (PGFTU) have called for global solidarity against Israel's genocide**, including by "taking action against complicit companies involved in implementing Israel's brutal and illegal siege ...." The PGFTU has thrown up a picket line, and we must not cross that line!

Israel has repeatedly bombed the **PGFTU offices**, its assault on Gaza has destroyed the Palestinian economy and left tens of thousands of Palestinian workers jobless, and it has placed Palestinian workers in Israeli detention centers where they faced harsh conditions, with reports of physical assault, starvation and other forms of abuse.

## Question 15

# 15. My union hasn't pledged to divest yet. How is my union connected to Israel's crimes, and why is it important for our union to divest?

You pay dues to your union. Your union likely deposits members' dues payments into bank accounts. Most banks then invest our deposits in securities, including stocks and corporate bonds. Some of those investments likely are in companies that profit from Israeli's oppression of Palestinians.

Furthermore, many union workers have pension or 401k plans. Similar to the bank accounts, the funds in those retirement accounts are invested, and the investment pool likely includes companies that profit from war or Israel's oppression of Palestinians.

## Question 16

# 16. I've heard about Bay Area Divest!. How is DFA different?

DFA is the East Bay DSA campaign which has similar goals to [Bay Area Divest! \(BAD!\)](#), and we all aim to contribute to the liberation of Palestine by pushing our Bay Area local governments to divest. Some DFA members also organize with BAD!.

## Question 17

# 17. But Hamas...

We are focused on helping to end the suffering and oppression of the Palestinian people, who have been terrorized since 1948 by Israeli settler colonialism. They have been ethnically cleansed and denied the right of return, seen their land taken from them since 1948 and then occupied since 1967, and been subject to a brutal apartheid system of segregation and discrimination by Israel. This campaign is about supporting their liberation and doing our part to help them realize freedom from oppression.

The United States does not fund Hamas. Our state and local governments and the companies they invest in do not fund or work with Hamas. **If we want to help end this conflict, then we need to focus on severing ties to the one and only hostile actor in this tragedy that we are financially connected to and enable: the apartheid state of Israel.**

## Question 18

# 18. But what about the conflicts in the Congo, Sudan, Haiti, and elsewhere? Why don't you care about those?

We care about human suffering everywhere and vehemently oppose the murder and oppression of people in the Congo, Sudan, Haiti, and elsewhere. **We are focused on Palestinian liberation because Israel is currently carrying out a genocidal campaign on a people whose lands it has occupied and blockaded for decades, and our government is actively and materially enabling these atrocities.** That makes us complicit as taxpayers, and we believe we have a duty and the power to challenge our government's complicity in Israel's crimes. We also know that our local governments invest our tax dollars in companies that enable Israel's oppression of Palestinians.

Our governments are materially enabling a genocide, occupation, and apartheid state that hurts Palestinians. If you start a campaign to challenge our government's funding of a genocide or other crimes in another country, please let us know, as we would support it in concert with the aims of our own divestment campaign.