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Dear Fellow UC Student Leaders,

I am writing as the External Vice President of the Associated Students of the University of California Berkeley to share with you news of a recent bill passed by our student senate, SB 160, "A Bill in Support of Human Rights in the West Bank and Gaza Strip." You can find a copy of this bill attached.

SB 160 is a positive step toward increased corporate social responsibility. Specifically, it calls on the Regents to engage in targeted divestment of university funds from companies profiting from human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Companies the UC invests in that are mentioned in the bill include Caterpillar, Cement Roadstone Holdings, and Hewlett Packard. These companies have assisted the Israeli military in the illegal demolition of Palestinian homes, the creation of an illegal separation wall beyond Israel's internationally recognized borders, and in the systematic and discriminatory violation of Palestinian freedom of movement internal to the Palestinian Territories, as documented by numerous human rights groups cited in our bill and elsewhere. By profiting from these investments our university maintains a relationship of complicity with these crimes, which SB 160 seeks to stop. Not only are we as students benefiting from these human rights abuses, but some students among us also are suffering directly from them as well, notably Palestinian students across the UC system who are put in the discomfiting position of knowing that their school is profiting from the demolition of their own family's homes and from a violent, discriminatory occupation that harms them and their loved ones.

Our bill is very clear to distinguish between the targeted divestment of international corporations - in this case American and European ones - and divestment from any and all things Israeli; SB 160 specifically demands targeted divestment from international companies that are directly benefiting from human rights abuses. No more. No less. The human rights abuses in question are consequences of Israeli policy, but the continued occupation is not sustained by the Israeli government alone. In fact, the tactic of divestment seeks to emphasize our own complicity in these abuses, and seeks to hold ourselves accountable to the basic maxim of 'do no evil.'

This bill affirms the common humanity of all students, Israeli, Palestinian and otherwise, We encourage you to do the same and support similar divestment at your campuses, if you have not yet done so.

All my best,

Shahryar Abbasi  
ASUC External Affairs Vice President  
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