

Maine's largest city becomes first on U.S. East Coast to back Israel divestment

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Image Credit: Maine Coalition for Palestine

Portland, September 6 (RHC)-- In the United States, the Portland City Council in Maine unanimously voted to divest all funds from companies complicit in Israeli human rights violations and war crimes against Palestinians.

Sponsored by the Maine Coalition for Palestine and the Maine chapter of Jewish Voices for Peace (JVP), the newly approved resolution contains a "divestment list" of more than 85 companies, from U.S.-based Chevron, Lockheed Martin, and Boeing to Israel-based Elbit Systems. The list also includes public entities such as Israel Bonds and state-owned Israel Aerospace Industries.

"The city of Portland recognizes the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza and seeks to avoid economically supporting this crisis through the city's financial investments," the resolution states.

"The city council urges that the city manager divest the city of Portland from all entities complicit in the current and ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza and occupation of Palestine, including, without limitation, all entities on the divestment list when it is feasible and carries no financial penalty to the city."

Additionally, the resolution "urges the city manager to not make any future directly held general fund investment in any entities complicit in the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and occupation of Palestine."

The Maine Coalition for Palestine said Wednesday's vote makes Portland the fourth U.S. city to adopt an Israel divestment resolution. Two California cities—Hayward and Richmond—and Hamtramck, Michigan passed similar divestment resolutions earlier this year.

"Just as the people of the world spoke to end South African apartheid with economic pressure, we must do the same for Israeli apartheid and genocide."

In a statement, the Maine coalition called out the state's congressional delegation and the Biden administration for supporting Israel's destruction of Gaza, whose population is facing mass starvation and disease—including the reemergence of polio.

"Generations of families are being decimated by U.S. bombs supplied to Israel," the coalition said. "Maine Senators [Susan] Collins and [Angus] King, and Representative [Jared] Golden, accept significant campaign contributions from the Israel lobby, and they have refused to listen to their constituents' demands."

"Americans overwhelmingly want a cease-fire and an arms embargo," the group continued. "Divestment sends a clear message that current U.S. policy towards Palestinians is morally unacceptable and does not serve the interests of our country. We urge everyone to join this effort in their own communities. Our tax money should not be spent killing women and children in Palestine."

Sarah Snyder, a spokesperson for the Maine chapter of JVP, said that "as Jews in Portland, we have immense gratitude for the Portland City Council's resolution to divest municipal funds from the Israeli government and corporations complicit in the ongoing genocide of Palestinians."

"We are outraged and grief-stricken by the continued atrocities perpetrated by Israel," Snyder added, "and fully support our city heeding the call to divest. Just as the people of the world spoke to end South African apartheid with economic pressure, we must do the same for Israeli apartheid and genocide."

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