

MUNDO OBRERO WORKERS WORLD

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DIVEST NOW!

A revolutionary demand

By Sara Flounders

Why have student encampments for Palestine ignited such an uproar of brutal repression, vicious police attacks, mass arrests, overwhelming condemnation in the corporate media and a new level of reactionary legislation in Congress?

The demand to divest, raised at almost every encampment, exposes the insidious inroads of the military-industrial complex into the heart of almost all higher education institutions in the U.S. today.

This demand to “divest” has revolutionary implications. Divestment is not just a threat to university boards, administrators and their alumni funders. It is a threat to the established capitalist order. It is a demand to break with the corporations engaged in looting the world. Hundreds of billions of dollars — perhaps trillions — are at stake.

The demand to divest is universally embraced by Palestine supporters, especially in U.S. campus actions. It flows naturally from months of horror, watching massive levels of destruction on densely populated civilian centers in Palestine and learning that institutions — where student, staff, community and union funds are directly involved — are funding these massive war crimes.

Groups of students gathered around small camping tents on campus lawns and school plazas hardly appear threatening. If the gatherings were for music or sports, they would go largely unnoticed. However, the Gaza Solidarity Encampments have raised the level of confrontation a step beyond mass demonstrations. The demands to divest and disclose the investments are a direct challenge to the capitalist system.

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State repression squelches free speech

Long established rights of free speech and freedom of assembly are being overwhelmed in tear gas and pepper spray. Elected officials, at the city, state, and federal level, Democrats and Republicans alike and police agencies at every level have acted in unison to shut down the Gaza Solidarity Encampments across the U.S. and now globally.

Students are being summarily suspended, expelled

from campus housing, fired from academic jobs, their scholarships canceled. In desperate efforts to shut down debate and silence the demands, universities are moving classes entirely online and even canceling graduation ceremonies. The irony is that many graduating in 2024 had limited in-person education when they left high schools because of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Social media, streaming videos and TV news are recording and showing the brutality of the mass arrests. The sheer number of arrests in the U.S. has sent out shock waves throughout the international community. The gloves are off.

During months of demonstrations and rallies opposing U.S. support for Israel’s brutal invasion of Gaza, there have been thousands of arrests. But more than 2,900

campus protests raise that Israel’s bombs have destroyed all of the universities in Gaza.

The demand to pull funds out of U.S. corporations supplying equipment and materials used in perpetrating a genocide in Gaza highlights the vast web of corporate entanglement. The endowments at U.S. institutions of higher education reach approximately \$840 billion, received through tax-exempt donations from ruling-class figures determined to shape institutions to serve continued capitalist rule. (Vijay Prashad, as cited in Tricontinental News (May 3), in “Campus Encampments challenging global imperialism,” Workers World, May 7)

Department of Defense dominates STEM studies

Far exceeding the accumulated endowments are funds directly pumped into universities by the Department of Defense. These research and development grants dominate the budget of entire departments, especially in STEM — science, technology, engineering, mathematics — fields.

The threat to withdraw government funding is all-powerful. The majority of science research projects are dependent on the Pentagon’s earmarked funding.

Solving planetary problems of food, health and climate are not on the Pentagon’s agenda. Its focus is on research and development of deadly, high-tech weapons.

A clear demand has arisen out of a living struggle that is embraced by millions who are in motion, who have learned the bitter truth that it is decades of U.S. political support, infusions of weapons and massive funding that is responsible for the Zionist war machine. This one word

“divest” challenges and exposes the whole corrupt edifice of collaboration with Zionism and with expanding U.S. wars around the globe.

The students, faculty, staff and their supporters are courageously raising a revolutionary demand that challenges the whole underpinning of education in the U.S. today. What is at stake?

The billionaire Alex Karp, CEO of Palantir, a CIA-backed surveillance and data mining-tech company tied to U.S. intelligence cartels and to Israel, summed up the debate from the viewpoint of the U.S. ruling class: “We think these things that are happening across college campuses are a sideshow. No, they are the show. If we lose the intellectual debate, you will not be able to deploy any army in the West, ever.” (Palantir on X, May 8)

Disclose! Divest! We will not stop! We will not rest! □

WW COMMENTARY



Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, April 2024.

PHOTO: @LOVEANDSTRUGGLEPHOTOS

arrested or detained at 57 campuses in two weeks’ time is an ominous message of heightened repression across the U.S. (tinyurl.com/yc2cry3k)

Endowments aid Israel’s war machine

Investments of billions of dollars of university endowment funds and Pentagon and Department of Defense research grants directly aid the Israeli war machine and are intertwined with top U.S. military contractors. Students, in mass actions and with detailed research, are exposing and challenging this corporate, military takeover of higher education.

The clear demand at campus actions to divest is linked to demands for “full disclosure” of the scale of the investments and the research grants for weapons, surveillance and even direct support for Israeli colleges. Many

'A resounding slap in the face'

The United Nations General Assembly voted May 10 in favor of making Palestine a full member with voting rights in the U.N. Currently, Palestine has only observer status.

Only nine countries — led by the U.S. and Israel — voted against full membership for Palestine, with 25 countries abstaining. Only two Latin American countries and one African member voted no or abstained. The 143 countries that backed Palestine contain the vast majority of the world's people and encompass most of its land mass.

Logic would dictate then, that Palestine would be admitted as a full member of the U.N. That's how democracy works, right? Wrong!

Since its formation in 1945, the U.N.'s structure has been rigged against colonized nations, by concentrating the real power not in the General Assembly but in the U.N. Security Council. This 15-member body includes five "permanent" members — the U.S., Russia, China, Britain and France — with veto power over resolutions passed by the Security Council, including recommendations from the General Assembly.

This means that the U.S. alone can block any decision made by most of the other countries in the world. This has been the case every time the General Assembly votes to oppose the U.S. blockade of Cuba. Only the U.S., Israel and a few other countries vote to maintain the blockade — but the economic strangulation of Cuba continues.

The way the U.N. is set up allows U.S. imperialism to advance its own interests against any country that gets in

its way. It's no accident that five of the U.N.'s six "principal organs" are U.S.-based, located in New York City. The one exception is the International Court of Justice, headquartered in The Hague. That in itself speaks volumes about who really calls the shots in this international body.

Because of a rigged system, in place for almost 80 years, U.S. imperialism can — and most likely will, as it did in the Security Council in April — deny Palestine a vote in the U.N. The General Assembly resolution asks the U.S. to reconsider its April veto. But the odds of that happening are slim to none.

The vote in favor of making Palestine a full U.N. member, while unenforceable, was a political victory. As Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine political bureau member Omar Murad stated May 12: "The voting in the United Nations General Assembly with a

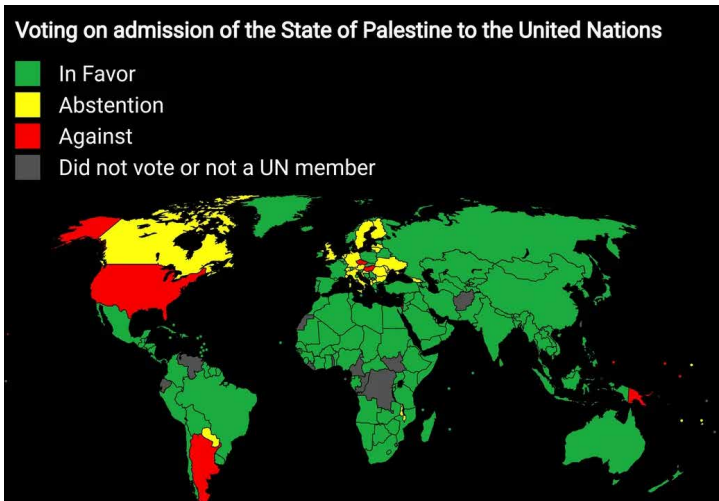
majority of 143 votes to accept the request for membership of the State of Palestine is an important achievement obtained thanks to the steadfastness of our people, their sacrifices and the support of the free people of the world, and it represents a resounding slap in the face of the Zionist entity." (Resistance News Network)

Yet justice in Palestine will never be

won by way of the U.N.'s processes. The Palestinian resistance, with the support of the international working class, is the force that can bring down the racist, settler-colonial Zionist state.

That victory is on the horizon! □

WORKERS WORLD editorial



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Join us in the fight for socialism!

Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multigendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it's the only way forward!

Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the neverending quest for ever-greater profits.

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on im/migrants, misogyny, LGBTQ2S+ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impoverishment and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it. Wages are lower than ever, and youth are saddled with seemingly insurmountable student debt, if they even make it to college. Black, Brown and Indigenous youth and trans people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

The ruthless ruling class today seeks to wipe out decades of gains and benefits won by hard-fought struggles by people's movements. The super-rich and their political representatives have intensified their attacks on the multinational, multigender and multigenerational working class. It is time to point the blame at — and challenge — the capitalist system.

WWP fights for socialism because the working class produces all wealth in society, and this wealth should remain in their hands, not be stolen in the form of capitalist profits. The wealth workers create should be socially owned and its distribution planned to satisfy and guarantee basic human needs.

Since 1959, Workers World Party has been out in the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and

worldwide. If you're interested in Marxism, socialism and fighting for a socialist future, please contact a WWP branch near you. □

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