

1 Resolution 8: ESG recommendations on discussion of
2 divestment from companies engaged in weapons
3 manufacturing

4 **Abstract:** The Ad Hoc Committee on Cornell University’s Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
5 and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) recommends discussions on divestment from the
6 following companies engaged in weapons manufacturing: BAE Systems, Boeing, Elbit Systems,
7 General Dynamics, L3Harris Technologies, Leonardo, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman,
8 RTX, and ThyssenKrupp.

9 **Sponsored by:** GPSA members of the ESG, CSR Committee, Owen ‘Gus’ Dunn-Hindle Faculty
10 Teaching, Advising, and Mentoring Award Committee Chair

11 **Reviewed by:** Executive Committee, 05/06/2024

12 **Whereas,** the Ad Hoc Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Environmental,
13 Social, and Governance (ESG) was established in the 2024 Spring term to conduct further research
14 on Cornell’s investments and make divestment recommendations to the Board of Trustees;

15 **Whereas,** the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GPSA) has a duty to engage in items of
16 importance to the graduate and professional student body, and the University’s investments are of
17 interest to the student body;

18 **Whereas,** the Student Assembly Referendum (see summary as appendix 1) showed a majority
19 (4,960/7,153 votes) in support of the following question: “Cornell has investments in companies
20 supporting the ongoing war in Gaza, which has been deemed as a “plausible genocide” by the
21 International Court of Justice in South Africa v. Israel. Should Cornell University follow their 2016
22 Guidelines for Divestment and divest from the following weapons manufacturers: BAE Systems,
23 Boeing, Elbit Systems, General Dynamics, L3Harris Technologies, Leonardo, Lockheed Martin,
24 Northrop Grumman, RTX, and ThyssenKrupp?”;

25 **Whereas,** the Cornell Coalition for Mutual Liberation (CML) graduate student survey titled “Cornell
26 Graduate Students Demand Justice & Divestment” has been signed by hundreds of graduate and
27 professional students (460 as of 05/06/2024) and recommends that Cornell divest from the same 10
28 named companies as the Student Assembly Referendum;

29 **Whereas,** there is reason to believe there is clear interest from the Graduate and Professional
30 Student body centered on divestment from the following potential investments and partnerships:
31 BAE Systems, Boeing, Elbit Systems, General Dynamics, L3Harris Technologies, Leonardo,
32 Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, RTX, and ThyssenKrupp;

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33 **Whereas**, this is the last meeting of GPSA for the AY23-24 and GPSA will not resume until
34 September 2024;

35 **Be it therefore resolved**, we recommend that the University Administration, the Trustees, and the
36 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)
37 Committee engage in immediate (Summer 2024) and formal discussions centered on the issue of
38 divestment from the above-listed companies engaged in weapons manufacturing;

39 **Be it further resolved**, that the University comply with the information request made on April 23rd,
40 2024 and future requests made by the CSR and ESG Committee to understand the depths of
41 university involvement with the above-listed companies engaged in weapons manufacturing;

42 **Be it further resolved**, that these discussions are open to different university constituencies,
43 through the other assemblies, due to the impact divestment may have on each of these groups;

44

45 Respectfully Submitted,

46 GPSA members of the ESG, CSR Committee, Owen 'Gus' Dunn-Hindle Faculty Teaching,
47 Advising, and Mentoring Award Committee Chair

Good afternoon, President Pollack,

I write to you today to report the results of the Student Assembly Referendum. I have compiled to the best of my abilities a summary of both sides of each question from the over 150 pages of submitted comments as required by our charter.

Question 1: Should Cornell University call for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza?

Summary of Pro statements: While there is a general understanding that Cornell making a statement on the war in Gaza will not make a tangible impact with our voice alone, it adds to the chorus of those speaking out against the atrocities in Palestine. As an educational institution committed to promoting peace, justice, and human rights, Cornell University should call for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza. The loss of life and humanity in Gaza is overwhelming; more than 30,000 Palestinians, including 25,000 women and children and close to 200 aid workers have been murdered by the IDF with U.S. weapons since Oct. 7. Condemning the actions of the Israeli government is about standing on the right side of history. If Cornell continues to stay silent and not call for a ceasefire, then we, in the face of injustice, had a voice and did nothing. Staying silent means hiding behind the cloth of ignorance and safety while millions of people suffer. It is a moral imperative that we as a University call for a ceasefire in Gaza. The International court of Justice has [opened an investigation into the conflict in Gaza determining that it is “at least plausible” that Israel has committed Genocidal acts.](#)

Summary of Con Statements: As an academic institution dedicated to the perspectives of all its constituents, Cornell University does not have the duty to comment on the decisions of foreign governments. While members of our community are free to speak and believe what they wish, it is not the duty of the University to take a stance. Israel has a fundamental right to defend itself and that is what it is doing in Gaza. [Israel has eliminated over 10,000 Hamas combatants.](#) If a ceasefire is announced then there is a possibility that Hamas regains power and continues its brutal attacks on the State of Israel. This referendum places all the blame on Israel when Hamas has been the ones who have continued to turn down a ceasefire.

Results For Question 1

Total Votes Cast: 7,117 (46.53% of Undergraduate Students)

Pro: 5,043 (70.8%)

Con: 2,074 (29.2%)

70.8% of Undergraduate Students who voted in this referendum believe that Cornell University should call for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza

Question 2: Cornell has investments in companies supporting the ongoing war in Gaza, which has been deemed as a “plausible genocide” by the International Court of Justice in South Africa v. Israel. Should Cornell University follow their 2016 Guidelines for Divestment and divest from the following weapons manufacturers: BAE Systems, Boeing,

Elbit Systems, General Dynamics, L3Harris Technologies, Leonardo, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, RTX, and ThyssenKrupp?

Summary of Pro Statements: Cornell University as an institution should not be complicit in the deaths of human beings in Gaza or elsewhere. By investing the endowment in such companies, we as an institution are contributing financially to the deaths of others. The fact that the ICJ found plausible cause to open up an investigation into the actions of Israel on the grounds of Genocide, and given that ICJ rulings take years to be released, Cornell University has a responsibility to divest now. [The Board of Trustees has an obligation to follow its own guidelines and divest from countries and companies that are acting on or complicit in genocide.](#) The 10 arms dealers listed above supply Israel with the tools of death they need to perpetrate these crimes against the people of Palestine. Not divesting in South Africa [has maintained a moral stain](#) on the University since the opportunity arose for us to take action — do not let the same thing happen again.

Summary of Con Statements: Cornell should continue to grow its endowments regardless of what its investments are. Cornell isn't directly contributing to loss of life by investing in companies that do far more than produce weapons. Any company's products can be used for good or for evil and in the case of Israel, those weapons are being used for good to eradicate terrorists in the Middle East. While a case has been brought against Israel by South Africa in the International Court of Justice, [the ICJ has not yet determined if Israel is committing a genocide](#), which is contrary to the message that has been spread. The Board of Trustees has an obligation to follow the rules it has created yet there is not sufficient evidence to back up the assertion of genocide.

Results for Question 2

Total Votes Cast: 7,153 (46.77% of Undergraduate Students)

Pro: 4,960 (69.3%)

Con: 2,193 (30.7%)

69.3% of Students who voted in this referendum believe that Cornell University should divest from BAE Systems, Boeing, Elbit Systems, General Dynamics, L3Harris Technologies, Leonardo, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, RTX, and ThyssenKrupp

The Undergraduate community of Cornell University has made its voice overwhelmingly clear. I along with my friends, colleagues and peers would hope that you listen to the will of the people at this University. I urge you and the Board of Trustees to both stand against the needless death of millions of Palestinians and raise the question of divestment to preserve the principal mission of our university for a better future for all.

Yours sincerely,
Patrick Kuehl '24

President of the Student Assembly - Cornell University

Dr. Martha Pollack, President
300 Day Hall
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Ithaca, NY 14853

Subject: Request for specific information on Cornell University's endowment in relation to CSR and ESG policies

Dear President Pollack,

We are writing as members of the Student Assembly Ad Hoc Committee on Cornell University's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Policies. As representatives of Cornell University's student population, we are conducting a review of Cornell University's current CSR and ESG policies as they pertain to the endowment and assessing the extent to which these policies align with the university's values and broader societal expectations.

To effectively examine and draft a report on Cornell University's endowment policies in relation to CSR and ESG principles, it is essential that we acquire accurate and specific information about Cornell University's endowment. We would appreciate it if you can provide us with the following information:

- 1.) A list of companies in which Cornell University holds investments of any kind, through any financial mechanism, that develop, distribute, and/or sell technologies, vehicles, equipment, materials and/or intelligence that are used in, could be used in, and/or are designed to be used in any of the of following cases: physical defense, violence, armed conflicts, and acts of war.
- 2.) A list of funds, investment managers, and/or other investment vehicles with whom Cornell University invests where at least one portfolio company develops, distributes, and/or sells technologies, vehicles, equipment, materials, and/or intelligence that are used in, could be used in, and/or are designed to be used in any of the of following cases: physical defense, violence, armed conflicts, and acts of war. For each fund, investment manager, and/or other investment vehicle listed, please identify the corresponding company or companies that meet the outlined criteria.
- 3.) A list of mutual funds, ETFs, index funds, and/or other investment vehicles that have underlying shares in companies that develop, distribute, and/or sell technologies, vehicles, equipment, materials and/or intelligence that are used in, could be used in, or are designed to be used in any of the of following cases: physical defense, violence, armed conflicts, and acts of war. For each mutual fund, EFT, index fund, and other investment vehicles listed, please identify the corresponding company or companies that meet the outlined criteria.
- 4.) The amount of money and/or percentage of the endowment that is invested (either directly or indirectly, through any financial mechanism) in companies that develop, distribute, and/or sell technologies, vehicles, equipment, materials and/or intelligence that are used in, could be used in, or are designed to be used in any of the of following cases: physical defense, violence, armed conflicts, and acts of war.

Thank you in advance for your time in addressing this matter. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Respectfully,

Ad Hoc Committee on Cornell University's CSR and ESG policies

Owen Dunn-Hindle, Flora Meng, Adam Vinson, Sarah Severson, Kayla Singer, Pranav Kaundinya, David Suarez, Andrew Chen