

# Confronting Union Antisemitism: Protecting Workers from Big Labor Abuses

William A. Sussman  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

United States House of Representatives  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions

July 9, 2024

Chairman Good, Ranking Member DeSaulnier, and Members of the Subcommittee:

My name is William A. Sussman. I am a doctoral student in computer science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and this past year I served as president of MIT Graduate Hillel.

Last December, this Committee heard MIT's president testify that calling for the genocide of Jews "can be antisemitic, depending on the context." Allow me to share some of that context.

According to the Anti-Defamation League, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) is "an international campaign aimed at delegitimizing and pressuring Israel, through the diplomatic, financial, professional, academic and cultural isolation of Israel, Israeli individuals, Israeli institutions, and, increasingly, Jews who support Israel's right to exist."

The MIT Graduate Student Union, known as the GSU, has engaged in BDS since its inception. It's one of the reasons they chose to affiliate with the United Electrical Workers (UE), which "endorses the BDS movement and urges the union at all levels to become engaged in BDS."

In 2022, a plurality of MIT graduate students (46.7%) voted to install this union as our exclusive bargaining agent, and in September 2023, MIT capitulated to its demand for a contract with mandatory dues.

Then came October 7. According to the American Jewish Committee, " Hamas terrorists waged the deadliest attack on Jews since the Holocaust — slaughtering babies, raping women, burning whole families alive, and taking hundreds of innocent civilians hostage."

The blood had not yet dried when my colleagues at MIT declared, "Victory is Ours." The full-time GSU staff organizer told NBC10 Boston, "Those who rebel against oppression cannot be blamed for rebelling against that repression."

In November, my union representative joined anti-Israel protesters who were occupying a building, and when threatened with suspensions, the GSU backed the protesters.

Meanwhile, the GSU illegally threatened to terminate anyone who refused to pay for their so-called activism. I filed a charge against the union with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), which agreed that the GSU had violated our Beck rights. However, the NLRB refused to require training of union agents, who continue to break the law.

In January, when MIT brought disciplinary charges against two graduate student protesters, the GSU blamed “external pressure from billionaire donors and right-wing politicians” and organized another protest, this time in front of the discrimination and harassment office. One picket sign read, “Anti-Zionism  $\neq$  Anti-Semitism.”

In April, the GSU pushed through a ceasefire resolution that does not mention “peace,” “hostages,” or “Hammas,” and in May, the GSU vice president was arrested at yet another protest. She was banned from campus but remains on paid “union leave.”

As I wrote in the Wall Street Journal: Jewish graduate students are a minority at MIT. We can’t remove the GSU or disabuse it of its antisemitism. But we also can’t support an organization that actively works toward the eradication of the Jewish homeland, where I have family living now.

That is why many of us asked for a religious accommodation that would divert our compulsory dues from the UE to a charity. The union denied my request, telling me in a letter that “no principles, teachings or tenets of Judaism prohibit membership in or the payment of dues or fees to a labor union,” that one of UE’s founders was Jewish, and that opposition to BDS isn’t a position I hold for religious reasons. In other words, UE thinks it understands my faith better than I do.

With the help of the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation, I joined four other Jewish graduate students in filing discrimination charges against the union with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. In response, the GSU chanted “shame” against us, calling our lawyers “well-financed.” They forgot to mention our horns.

Facing potential charges of its own, MIT began approving religious accommodations, and the union followed suit. But UE represents graduate students at a dozen other universities, and it should not take five discrimination charges to exercise our freedom of religion and association. This Congress should pass the National Right to Work Act, so that unions have to earn their dues and think twice before discriminating against minorities.

As a lifelong Democrat, I would like to conclude with a warning for my fellow party members. A major union president who voted for FDR four times would later in life say, “I didn’t leave the Democratic Party, the Democratic Party left me.” That union president was Ronald Reagan. If the Democratic Party leaves the Jews, we will have no choice but to leave the party. Ironically, this incentive structure is precisely what’s missing from unions.

Thank you for the invitation to testify today, and I look forward to answering your questions.



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## BACKGROUND

# The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Campaign (BDS)

Published: 05.24.2022

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) is an international campaign aimed at delegitimizing and pressuring Israel, through the diplomatic, financial, professional, academic and cultural isolation of Israel, Israeli individuals, Israeli institutions, and, increasingly, Jews who support Israel's right to exist.

The BDS movement asserts that Israeli policies towards Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, and even some within the [Green Line](#), are [akin to those of apartheid South Africa](#). They argue that the same boycott and isolation tactics used to help dismantle the South African White minority government should be used against Israel in order to force it to change its policies towards the Palestinians. In practice, the global BDS movement doesn't seek to create a Palestinian state but rather aims to dismantle the Jewish state and end the right to Jewish national self-determination on any portion of this contested land.

BDS is one tactic in the long history of campaigns and efforts to delegitimize and isolate the State of Israel.

## Background:

The call for "boycott, divestment and sanctions" has its roots in anti-Israel calls to action at the start of the second Palestinian [Intifada](#) in 2000 and at the [2001 U.N.](#)

**Durban Conference Against Racism.** A July 2004 statement by The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), and a July 2005 statement by Palestinian civil society organizations called on the international community “to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era.” The statement also called for pressure on governments “to impose embargoes and sanctions against Israel.”

### **How BDS Operates:**

BDS campaigns frequently focus on demanding the "divestment" of university, municipal, church, union and other investment portfolios from companies that advocates claim “aid Israel’s occupation,” as well as calling for the “boycott” of Israeli products, professionals, professional associations and academic institutions, and artistic performances (in Israel and abroad).

The BDS movement’s regressive policy of “anti-normalization” forbids people-to-people exchanges, dialogue opportunities for Israelis and Palestinians or even interactions between “pro-Israel” and “pro-Palestine” groups and advocates unless the parties involved first recognize Israelis as “oppressors” and “colonizers.” BDS thus seeks to dehumanize Israelis and opposes the fundamental building blocks for Israeli-Palestinian understanding, peace-building and ultimate reconciliation, even at the grassroots level. Some supporters of BDS may genuinely believe that these tactics are a productive and non-violent way to effect change in the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While we all seek to resolve the conflict peacefully, BDS campaigns, which portray Israel as a pariah state and advocate that it be singularly targeted, are unfair, one-sided and disproportionate.

In fact, the BDS campaign does not support constructive measures to build Israeli-Palestinian engagement, nor does it promote peace negotiations or a mutually

negotiated two-state solution to the conflict. Rather, BDS presents a biased and simplistic approach to the complex Israeli-Palestinian conflict, positioning this dispute over territorial and nationalist claims as the fault of only one party – Israel - while ignoring other actors and dynamics such as Palestinian shared responsibility for the continuation of the conflict. BDS advocates for self-determination for Palestinians while denying to Jews that same right.

### **BDS, antisemitism and its impact:**

The BDS movement uses divisive and inaccurate terms like “[apartheid](#)”, “[genocide](#)”, “[settler colonialist](#),” and “[supremacists](#)” to refer to aspects of Israeli action or policy they criticize, language which serves to demonize the Jewish state and those who support its existence.

ADL believes that many of the founding goals of the BDS movement, which effectively reject or ignore the Jewish people’s right of self-determination, or that, if implemented, would result in the eradication of the world’s only Jewish state, are antisemitic.

Furthermore, some BDS advocates and campaigns engage in antisemitic rhetoric, including allegations of Jewish power, dual loyalty, and Jewish/Israeli culpability for unrelated issues and crises. Some have made clear their opposition to the existence of the state of Israel altogether, or justify/express support for violence against Israelis. Increasingly troubling are incidents involving BDS advocates holding all Jews culpable for the Israeli government’s actions, and advocating a litmus test for Jews to renounce Israel and/or Israeli policies in order to join certain [social activist movements](#).

BDS often gives rise to tensions in communities – in the U.S. we see it particularly on college campuses – that can result in the isolation and intimidation of Jews and supporters of Israel. With the focus on negating Israel and its supporters, BDS campaigns may create an environment in which antisemitic actions and expressions

may be emboldened.

## **Historical Roots of BDS:**

BDS is only the most recent and prominent tactic used to delegitimize Jewish statehood. The most infamous campaign was the [Arab economic boycott](#), which was established by the Arab League in 1945, even before the establishment of the State of Israel, and continues to be in official effect through today.

Other examples include the campaign to brand Zionism as racism, a claim that stems from a Soviet propaganda campaign, and which was affirmed by a United Nations General Assembly resolution in 1975 (repealed in 1991), as well as efforts by some allied governments to exclude Israel from international bodies and events. These campaigns – aimed at demonizing and punishing Israel – were government-initiated and primarily played out on state and international community level, in contrast to BDS, which is largely grass-roots focused.

Some activists, including some who consider themselves Zionists and supporters of Israel, support a boycott of settlements or settlement products as an expression of opposition to Israeli settlements. While such action is different from BDS campaigns that target all of Israel, Israelis and Israeli enterprises, much of this distinction is lost on the vast majority of people, and such campaigns can lead to the wholesale demonization of Israel and Israelis. Indeed, the BDS movement and their supporters often hail such initiatives as an endorsement of their cause.

### **RELATED CONTENT**

[Questions, Complexities and Context: Insights into Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#)





*The Union for Everyone | Members Run This Union*

## **UE Endorses BDS Movement for Peace and Justice in Israel and Palestine**



*Delegates to UE's 74th National Convention*

September 1, 2015

### **Pittsburgh**

*On Tuesday, September 1, UE issued the following press release:*

At its national convention in Baltimore August 16-20, the United Electrical Workers union (UE) adopted a resolution endorsing the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) to pressure Israel to end the occupation and grant Palestinians their freedom. UE is now the first national U.S. union to endorse BDS. The full resolution is below.

The global BDS movement arose from a 2005 call by Palestinian trade unions and human rights groups. UE's resolution also calls for a cutoff of U.S. aid to Israel and for U.S. support for a peace settlement on the basis of self-determination for Palestinians and the right to return. With its resolution UE joins COSATU of South Africa, Unite the Union in Britain and many other labor unions in supporting BDS as a step toward justice and peace in Palestine and Israel.

"We reached a breaking point when Israel launched the war on Gaza in 2014, killing over 2,000 people including 500 children. Because Israel has been unwilling to engage in real negotiations to bring about a just resolution to the occupation, this is a necessary step for labor to take in order to bring about a peaceful end to the conflicts there" said Carl Rosen, president of UE's Western Region and a member of the national executive board.

UE represents 30,000 workers across the country in the private and public sectors. At its five-day convention member delegates acted on 37 resolutions on collective bargaining, organizing, and political issues. UE's BDS statement upholds the union's long tradition of courageous stands on foreign policy issues, such as being the first union to oppose the Vietnam War.

The Palestinian Postal Workers Union has written to UE in response to its resolution. "...We would like to express our deepest appreciation for the courageous resolution on "Justice and Peace for the Peoples of Palestine and Israel"... in support of our right as Palestinians to live in peace and dignity as equals on our lands.... We commend you for calling on your government to change its one-sided foreign policy that disregards human rights and harms any efforts at reaching a just peace, and for fully endorsing our call for boycott, divestment & sanctions (BDS) launched a decade ago. We sincerely hope that other national unions in the US and many other countries will follow in your footsteps. Your active solidarity warms our hearts and gives us hope that one day the working class all over will mobilize as one to help us end this brutal colonial occupation, and bring down the blockade, walls and checkpoints."

UE General President Bruce Klipple says, "The widespread abuse of workers under the occupation is a concern for the global labor movement. We support our brothers and sisters in the labor movement who call for this peaceful protest to bring about a just peace in Israel and Palestine."

The United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, UE is an independent, member-run union representing both private and public sector workers.

*Here is the full text of the convention resolution:*

## **JUSTICE AND PEACE FOR THE PEOPLES OF PALESTINE AND ISRAEL**

In 1988, delegates to the UE 53<sup>rd</sup> Convention adopted the resolution “Time for a Just Settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.” In it they said, “The occupation by Israel of the West Bank and other Arab lands since 1967 has blocked the exercise of Palestinian national rights and resulted in ongoing violations of human, social, political, economic and particularly trade union rights of Palestinians...” The resolution said the U.S. government had “contributed to the continued conflict by its one-sided support for Israel and its failure to take into account the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people,” and it called for the U.S. government to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization and for the creation of a Palestinian state.

For more than 25 years the U.S. has engaged in a so-called “peace process” with Israeli and Palestinian representatives. But the U.S. role has remained extremely one-sided. The U.S. provides Israel \$3 billion a year in aid and repeatedly uses its UN veto to shield Israel from criticism of its human rights abuses. The Palestinians are worse off. In the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, Israel continues to confiscate homes and land to expand Israeli settlements which violate international law. Since 1967 Israel has settled more than 500,000 of its citizens in the West Bank, and has been building a wall that separates neighboring towns and cuts off farmers from their fields. Many prominent human rights activists including former President Jimmy Carter and South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu have called the system of Israeli rule over Palestinian people “apartheid.”

In Gaza, 1.8 million Palestinians are crowded into a tiny enclave under continuous military and economic blockade. In the summer of 2014 Israel waged a merciless war on the impoverished population of Gaza. More than 2,000 Palestinians were killed. The vast majority were civilians, including more than 500 children; and the physical destruction was overwhelming. UE’s officers issued a statement expressing our union’s alarm and over 300

Holocaust survivors and descendants signed a full-page newspaper ad that condemned the Israeli attack as genocide and declared, “never again must mean never again for anyone.” Yet incredibly, the U.S. Senate voted unanimously at the time to endorse Israel’s actions.

The source of the conflict goes back to the origins of the State of Israel. The population was overwhelmingly Palestinian Arab (Muslim and Christian) before 1947-48, when well-armed Zionist militias seized most of the territory of Palestine and expelled 750,000 people from their cities, villages and farms. They executed much of the Palestinian leadership and declared the founding of the State of Israel. As a result millions of Palestinians are refugees both in the occupied territories and in other countries. Israel prohibits their return to their homes.

In recent years racism and extremism in Israel has grown more severe. One-fifth of Israeli citizens are Palestinians who survived ethnic cleansing. Some members of parliament, including cabinet members in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s government, call for stripping their citizenship and expelling them. Some also call for expelling all Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza and annexing them to Israel. The “peace process”, supposedly aimed at negotiating the terms of Palestinian statehood in those territories, has been dead at least since March when Netanyahu, in his reelection campaign, declared he would never accept a Palestinian state.

In July 2005 Palestinian trade unions and hundreds of Palestinian civil society organizations called for a worldwide campaign of boycotts to pressure Israel to end its apartheid over the Palestinians. This has developed into a global movement called Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions. BDS was modeled after the 1980s international solidarity campaign that put economic pressure on South Africa’s government which helped end apartheid.

The summer 2014 Israeli attack on Gaza increased worldwide support for BDS. UE Local 150 endorsed BDS. The largest union in Britain, UNITE, endorsed BDS in July 2014. UAW Local 2865, which represents 13,000 graduate employees of the University of California, also endorsed BDS last year. COSATU, the Congress of South African Trade Unions that helped defeat apartheid in that country, is a strong backer of BDS. Many progressive Jewish organizations and individuals, in the U.S., Israel and elsewhere actively support BDS as a way to bring about peace and justice for the people of Israel and Palestine.

## **THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THIS 74<sup>th</sup> UE CONVENTION:**

1. Calls on Congress and the Administration to end all U.S. military aid to Israel; and to pressure Israel to end the occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the siege of Gaza and negotiate a peace agreement on the basis of equality, democracy, and human rights for the Palestinian and Israeli people, including Palestinian self determination and the right of return for refugees.
  2. Endorses the BDS movement and urges the union at all levels to become engaged in BDS and the movement for peace, justice and equality between the Palestinians and Israelis.
- 

For more information on why BDS, please visit the links below:

1. Ripe for Child Abuse: Palestinian Child Labor in Israeli Agricultural Settlements in the West Bank (<https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/04/13/ripe-abuse/palestinian-child-labor-israeli-agricultural-settlements-west-bank>)
2. How Israel Withholds Labor Rights From the West Bank's Palestinian Workers (<http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/32517-how-israel-withholds-labour-rights-from-the-west-bank-s-palestinian-workers>)
3. Labour Struggle in West Bank belies Claims of Harmony (<http://eng.wac-maan.org.il/?p=1380>)
4. Boycott List from Partners for Progressive Israel (<http://progressiveisrael.org/list-of-settlement-products/>)
5. Explanation of Divestment (<http://www.bdsmovement.net/activecamps/divestment>) Provided by the BDS Movement
6. Read about the G4S campaign on the BDS Movement Website (<http://www.bdsmovement.net/activecamps/g4s>)

**Tags:** Palestine



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Union Website Discussion**

**KF:** Wix or SquareSpace? Wix is an Israeli-owned company, which conflicts with BDS. Let's continue the discussion.

**Jo:** I've never been clear on impetus behind this decision. For the long term, why not just host our own website. Our site will be mostly static, right? At most, an embedded Google Form. If done correctly, this would save money and look more professional.

**KF:** [REDACTED] have agreed to work on this. They both prefer to work with one of these platforms. Kaylee wants to work on Wix, but both are fine with SS.

**Jo:** Is this still being done exclusively within going public.

**KF:** Yes.

**JR:** If someone wants to design a website for the union, that's great. Right now, our options are to go with one of these. In the long run, SS will avoid potential divisiveness. [REDACTED] doesn't mind SS. We've already used Wix for RISE, and we're not taking that down or transferring. After the RISE campaign is concluded, we can just transfer the relevant material to SS.

**PK:** Re: national policies, the UE national has endorsed BDS. One of the only national unions to do so. No blowback from membership, but big blowback from Israeli agencies. I can also put folks in touch with person who does webdev for UE national. Drupal is good and user friendly.

**KJC:** Agreeing with [REDACTED], our local BDS question is important, but we need more discussion than now will allow. Let's decouple the questions and go with SS for now. We can figure out the BDS question down the line. Let's not put the cart before the horse. No need to discuss BDS *right now*. Should later, but let's do so later.

**AT:** I agree in that I want to avoid having this discussion. It's also unimportant because it's a losing issue regardless of where we come down. This is never going to be an issue for which we fight. A position would be purely symbolic and would cost political capital. Choosing SS would kind of duck the question, but not really. It feels more like taking a position. It is not sufficient for an org to be Israeli to merit condemnation. That bothers me. Also, managing







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mit\_caa Members of the MIT community and beyond, join MIT CAA for a rally and march tomorrow at 4PM in front of the Cambridge City Hall

Meet us at Killian at 3PM to walk over together  
38w



sjamesson7729  
29w Reply



sjamesson7729  
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October 8, 2023

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## ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

# Pro-Palestinian demonstrators defend violence in Israel as resistance against oppression

The region has a long, complicated history of tension and conflict, but this is the deadliest outbreak of violence in decades

By **Kirsten Glavin** • Published October 9, 2023 • Updated on October 10, 2023 at 12:12 am

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Hamas' surprise invasion and Israel's response have sparked reactions all around the world.

As more reports detail the violence erupting in Israel, contention spilled into the streets of Cambridge, Massachusetts, Monday as hundreds supporting the Palestinian resistance rallied at City Hall.

Israel declared war on Hamas Sunday after the Palestinian militant group's unprecedented surprise attacks over the weekend. [The death toll has reached at least 1,600 on both sides](#), including at least 11 American citizens. As many as 130 people, including children, have reportedly been taken hostage by Hamas fighters. President Joe Biden has [declared "rock solid and unwavering" support for Israel](#).

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Back in Cambridge Monday, calls for liberation and signs reading "End occupation now" filled the lawn as hundreds of people supporting Palestinians gathered and marched the street toward Boston.

"Those who rebel against oppression cannot be blamed for rebelling against that repression," said Jeff Rosenberg who was at the rally in support of Palestinians.



Hamas' weekend attack and Israel's response have left more than 1,000 dead so far.

The region has a long, complicated history of tension and conflict, but this is the deadliest outbreak of violence in Israel since the 1973 war with Egypt and Syria.

"It's unfortunate right that we've had this occupation for 75 years now. An unfortunate reality is that wherever there is oppression there will be resistance," said Suhail Purka, a member of the Boston South Asian Coalition and the Party for Socialism and Liberation.

Some attending the rally even went so far as to call the weekend violence a win.

That sentiment was met fiercely by counter-protesters, who gathered on the other side of the street. There were tears and anger from those standing with Israel, who compared Hamas to ISIS and other terrorist groups.

"I moved here from Israel two months ago and my heart breaks. Not just because of what Hamas is doing but because what they are doing right now. Choosing to support inhumane acts of violence, terrorism, mass murder and kidnapping," Liyam Chitayat, an MIT PhD student, said.

## **Photos: Israel-Hamas War**

*Mahmud Hams/AFP via Getty Images*



10F 48

Palestinians stand next to a crater caused by an explosion from an Israeli airstrike in Khan Yunis in the southern of Gaza Strip, on Oct. 16, 2023.

Experts have been weighing in on the ongoing divide, including Lawrence H. Summers, a professor of economics at Harvard University. Summers [decried a statement released by a set of student groups](#) that placed the blame for the weekend's horrors on Israel.

"Nothing justifies murdering babies in front of their parents, or murdering parents in front of their children or raping young girls for the sport of it. And that is what happened over the weekend and that is where the focus should be," Summers said.

He added that many universities, including Harvard, have failed their students by not being vocal about their support for Israeli students.

Israel had increased airstrikes on the Gaza Strip Monday and sealed the area off from supplies, while Hamas pledged to kill Israelis taken hostage if attacks targeted civilians without warning.

**More coverage of the Israel-Hamas war**



Text Message  
Wed, Nov 29 at 2:13 PM

Hey Will, I'm Ruth, with MIT GSU.

This is a friendly reminder that as an RA/TA at MIT you are required to sign up for dues or agency fees by Dec 5 as a condition of employment. Anyone who hasn't signed up by then will accrue back dues that will need to be paid or their appointment may be terminated early by MIT. Please take a minute to sign up: <https://linktr.ee/mitgsu>

Please reply with any questions! Reply STOP to opt out of future texts.



[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
December 4, 2023

Andrew Dinkelaker, UE General Secretary-Treasurer, Non-member Objections  
United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America (UE)  
4 Smithfield Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Dear Mr. Dinkelaker:

1. My name is William A. Sussman.
2. My address is [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
3. The UE local union representing the bargaining unit in which I have been included is MIT Graduate Student Union (GSU).
4. The name of my employer is Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).
5. My employee identification number is [REDACTED].

I am Jewish, and I serve as president of MIT Graduate Hillel. Most weeks I attend Shabbat services, where I pray facing East toward Jerusalem. I pray for the State of Israel and for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

UE endorses<sup>1</sup> the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS), which the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) describes as “an international campaign aimed at delegitimizing and pressuring Israel, through the diplomatic, financial, professional, academic and cultural isolation of Israel, Israeli individuals, Israeli institutions, and, increasingly, Jews who support Israel’s right to exist.”<sup>2</sup> **I must therefore object to paying the union on religious grounds.**

Sincerely,

*William A. Sussman*

William A. Sussman

CC: Sally Kornbluth, President, MIT  
Melissa Nobles, Chancellor, MIT  
Ian Waitz, Vice Chancellor, MIT  
Anthony Moriello, Office of the General Counsel, MIT  
Ellen McClintock, Office of Labor Relations, MIT  
Rabbi Michelle Fisher, Executive Director, MIT Hillel  
Ruth Hanna, Steward, MIT GSU

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<sup>1</sup> “UE Endorses BDS Movement for Peace and Justice in Israel and Palestine,” *ueunion.org*, 1 September 2015.

<sup>2</sup> “The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Campaign (BDS),” *adl.org*, 24 May 2022.



**Subject:** On Free Speech and Protest: MIT Cross-Union Statement  
**Date:** Monday, December 4, 2023 at 8:45:05 PM Eastern Standard Time  
**From:** MIT GSU <contact@mitgsu.org>  
**To:** Will Sussman <wsussman@mit.edu>

[View this email in your browser](#)



We, as labor unions on MIT campus, stand united in condemning MIT's recent infringement on our community members' freedom of speech and right to peaceful protest. We recognize MIT's recent actions, including threatening suspension on peaceful student protestors and sending police to shut down an educational event, as attempts by the MIT administration to silence student voices and intimidate and punish students for protesting.

As unionized workers, we understand how important it is to protect our democratic rights to free speech and protest, as these are foundational rights to the labor movement and workers organizing together for a better life. MIT's threats against students exercising their basic First Amendment rights create a culture of fear and censorship on campus. We strongly condemn MIT's actions and stand united behind students who choose to exercise their democratic rights to free speech and protest.

We call on the MIT administration to uphold the rights of students and workers to peacefully protest on campus, and on the entire MIT community to stand together against political censorship.

MIT GSU-UE Local 256 Interim Grievance Committee  
UNITE HERE Local 26

## Follow us on social media!



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**Our mailing address is:**

[mitgradunion@gmail.com](mailto:mitgradunion@gmail.com)

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Massachusetts Institute of Technology



Yesterday we spoke out against MIT's violation of our contract! MIT admin has denied graduate workers' contractually-guaranteed right to union representation during the IDHR (Institute Discrimination and Harassment Response) disciplinary meetings. We won't stand for this and will defend our harassment and discrimination protections!

22w



ruhannaru 🔥🔥🔥

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January 31

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# United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America

CARL F. ROSEN  
General President

ANDREW C. DINKELAKER  
General Secretary-Treasurer

MARK D. MEINSTER  
Director of Organization



February 8, 2024

VIA U.S. MAIL

William Sussman  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

*Dear Mr. Sussman:*

I am in receipt of your December 4, 2023 letter in which you communicated your objection to paying dues or fees to UE Local 256, MIT GSU, because of your Jewish faith. After careful consideration, your objection is denied.

First, no principles, teachings or tenets of Judaism prohibit membership in or the payment of dues or fees to a labor union. Historically, many Jews, including founding UE Director of Organization James Matles, have been members of unions, which continues today.

Secondly, the statements in your letter demonstrate that your objection to paying dues or fees is based on your political views and not your religious belief. For example, you objected that, "UE endorses the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS)..." This, and other, statements in your letter constitute disagreements with positions taken or policies endorsed by the union.

For the above reasons, your objection to paying union dues or fees is denied.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Dinkelaker'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Andrew Dinkelaker  
UE General Secretary-Treasurer

CC: MIT GSU









*This resolution was put forward by an elected special committee to be voted on for adoption by members of the Graduate Student Union at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (United Electrical Local 256) and was ratified by a referendum vote of the union membership.*

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## Resolution affirming the need for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and ceasing MIT labor support for Israeli military objectives

**WHEREAS**, the Israeli government's intensification of its ongoing siege and assault on Gaza has killed over 32,000 Palestinians in the last six months, the majority being unarmed civilians, with more than 12,300 of those being children;

**WHEREAS**, the Israeli military's campaign has forcibly displaced more than 1.9 million Palestinians from their homes;

**WHEREAS**, there is substantial evidence of the Israeli government and military deploying illegal white phosphorus munitions in Gaza and Lebanon, destroying civilian architecture including hospitals and universities, and engaging in the collective punishment of Palestinians by restricting basic necessities and humanitarian aid;

**WHEREAS**, the United Nations International Court of Justice has found it plausible that the actions of the Israeli government amount to genocide and has issued provisional measures instructing the Israeli government to prevent and punish those involved with inciting genocide against Palestinians in Gaza;

**WHEREAS**, the United Nations Security Council has made clear the pressing need for an immediate ceasefire by passing a two-week ceasefire resolution which "reiterates its demand for the lifting of all barriers to the provision of humanitarian assistance";

**WHEREAS**, the Israeli government has continued its military engagement and its imposition of severe restrictions on humanitarian aid into Gaza, resulting in the highest levels of catastrophic hunger and starvation recorded in the last two decades;

**WHEREAS**, the US foreign aid for the Israeli military includes the transaction of military technologies such as attack drones, perimeter defense systems, artificial intelligence for military applications, underwater surveillance drones, and precision-guided missiles;

**WHEREAS**, since 2015 the Ministry of Defense of Israel has devoted over \$11.5 million in research funding for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to support the above military goals by developing technologies such as autonomous robotic swarms, neural network compression, algorithms for pursuit-evasion strategies, underwater persistent monitoring, and magnetic wave detection;

**WHEREAS**, several such projects are ongoing or have been renewed in the last six months and are thus actively soliciting MIT graduate labor to further Israeli military objectives;

**WHEREAS**, the MIT administration has instituted unprecedented restrictions on campus expression and initiated disciplinary proceedings against multiple MIT community members, including graduate workers, organizing in support of Palestine;

**WHEREAS**, two MIT graduate workers protesting in support of Palestine have had their right to union representation violated by the MIT administration during disciplinary hearings held against them;

**WHEREAS**, the MIT administration has enabled the spread of defamatory character attacks and harassment against graduate workers by faculty members and administrators;

**WHEREAS**, MIT community members have historically taken action in support of indigenous struggles during Apartheid South Africa and the Vietnam War, with graduate students campaigning for divestment and protesting against wartime military research;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that we, the MIT Graduate Student Union – United Electrical Local 256, join the global call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza and an end to the Israeli government's military siege and blockade of the Gaza strip;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that we recognize MIT's institutional complicity in furthering violence against the Palestinian people through the Institute's special ties with the Israeli military and affirm the pressing moral call for the MIT community to take immediate steps toward cutting all research and financial ties with the Israeli military;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that we oppose all threats and intimidations towards MIT workers and community members engaging in political speech on these issues and defend the right to freedom of expression in the workplace; we condemn all occurrences of prejudice and defamation on campus as acts of division which impede our ability to unite and improve our working conditions.





# NOTICE TO EMPLOYEES AND MEMBERS

**POSTED PURSUANT TO A SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT  
APPROVED BY A REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF  
THE NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD  
AN AGENCY OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT**

**THE NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS ACT GIVES YOU THE RIGHT TO:**

- Form, join, or assist a union;
- Choose a representative to bargain with your employer on your behalf;
- Act together with other employees for your benefit and protection;
- Choose not to engage in any of these protected activities.

**WE WILL NOT** restrain or coerce you in the exercise of the above rights.

**WE WILL NOT** fail to notify you of your rights under *NLRB v. General Motors Corp.*, 373 U.S. 734 (1963) (*General Motors*) and *Communications Workers v. Beck*, 487 U.S. 735 (1988) (*Beck*) prior to obligating you to pay dues and fees pursuant to a union-security clause.

**WE WILL NOT** tell you that it is mandatory that you fill out and send in dues or agency fee check-off authorization forms.

**WE WILL NOT** in any like or related manner restrain or coerce you in the exercise of your rights under Section 7 of the Act.

**WE HAVE** told you that it is your *General Motors* and *Beck* rights: (1) to be or remain a nonmember; (2) as a nonmember to object to paying for nonrepresentational activities and to obtain a reduction in fees for such nonrepresentational activities; (3) to be given sufficient information to enable you to intelligently decide whether to object; and (4) as a nonmember to be apprised of any internal union procedures for filing objections.

**YOU HAVE THE RIGHT** to pay your dues or agency fees to the MIT Graduate Student Union by means other than check-off authorization.

**MIT GRADUATE STUDENT UNION**

(Labor Organization)

**Dated:** April 18, 2024

**By:**

*Johne Capistrano & Wallcut*  
(Representative)

President

(Title)

*The National Labor Relations Board is an independent Federal agency created in 1935 to enforce the National Labor Relations Act. We conduct secret-ballot elections to determine whether employees want union representation and we investigate and remedy unfair labor practices by employers and unions. To find out more about your rights under the Act and how to file a charge or election petition, you may speak confidentially to any agent with the Board's Regional Office set forth below or you may call the Board's toll-free number 1-844-762-NLRB (1-844-762-6572). Hearing impaired callers who wish to speak to an Agency representative should contact the Federal Relay Service (link is external) by visiting its website at <https://www.federalrelay.us/tty> (link is external), calling one of its toll free numbers and asking its Communications Assistant to call our toll free number at 1-844-762-NLRB.*

Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr. Federal Building, 10 Causeway St., Room 1002, Boston, MA 02222-1001

Telephone: (617)565-6700 Hours of Operation: 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**THIS IS AN OFFICIAL NOTICE AND MUST NOT BE DEFACED BY ANYONE**

This notice must remain posted for 60 consecutive days from the date of posting and must not be altered, defaced or covered by any other material. Any questions concerning this notice or compliance with its provisions may be directed to the office listed above.







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**INCIDENT [24003827-1](#)  
TRESPASS C266 S120**

**VASSAR ST-COURTESY BOOKINGS FOR MIT POLICE**

Cambridge Police responded the 30 block of Vassar Street to assist with crowd control at an MIT property. MIT Police placed the following individuals under arrest:

Turner Adornetto, 28, of Somerville, was charged with trespassing and disorderly conduct.

Max Peters, 21, of Boston, was charged with trespassing, disorderly conduct, assault & battery on a +60/disabled with injury, and assault and battery on a police officer.

Katherine Pearce, 19, of Cambridge, was charged with trespassing and disorderly conduct.

Nishad Gothoskar, 27, of Cambridge, was charged with trespassing.

Ruth Hanna, 29, of Belmont, was charged with trespassing and disorderly conduct.

Christian Cmehil-Warn, 26, of Cambridge, was charged with trespassing.

Amira Ravshanova, 20, of Cambridge, was charged with trespassing.

Morgan Guempel, 22, of Cambridge, was charged with trespassing and disorderly conduct.

Rahaf Zaza, 21, of Wellesley, was charged with trespassing, disorderly conduct, and assault with a dangerous weapon (shod foot).

[REDACTED]





# Open letter regarding GSU priorities

Dear Colleagues,

We are writing to express concern regarding the GSU's recent organizational priorities. GSU leadership has dedicated significant time and resources to take a position on the Israel-Hamas war - deviating and detracting from the GSU's core mission of representing the collective labor interests of all graduate students. This has served to weaken our union and alienate its members.

GSU leadership has claimed that MIT has violated our contract by suspending graduate students for protesting. However, these individuals were disciplined for disrupting free use of campus facilities after repeated warnings to stop from MIT. Moreover, time spent fighting these issues is wasted as the collective bargaining agreement waives the union's right to interfere in such disciplinary issues:

"The Union acknowledges that it has no right to interfere with or grieve decisions regarding academic performance, academic discipline, or student conduct policy violations, including such decisions that may impact a student's employment." –*CBA Article 6, Section 2 (page 18)*

We are disturbed by GSU leadership's irresponsible behavior in misleading the graduate student population. By falsely claiming that MIT violated the contract, they undermine the credibility and legitimacy of organized labor at MIT in all future disputes. The union is dedicating time and resources constructing grievances that are not protected under the contract rather than focusing on issues that affect all graduate students, such as pay and healthcare coverage.

We call on our GSU leaders to faithfully represent the collective unifying interest of the entire graduate student population, or resign.

Signed,

MIT Graduate Students

*If you are an MIT graduate student and wish to sign this letter, please fill out the form below.*

1. Jason Friedman (Sloan)
2. Roi Orzach (14)
3. Liyam chitayat (CSB)
4. Benjy Firester (math)
5. Leo Cohen (Sloan School of Management)

6. Elyssa Hofgard (EECS)
7. Reuven Falkovich (Chemistry)
8. Sabrina Corsetti (EECS)
9. Parmida Davarmanesh (EECS)
10. Yael Kirkpatrick (Mathematics )
11. Rebecca Lin (EECS)
12. Daniel Edelman (EECS)
13. Katerina Boukin (CEE)
14. Inbar Chityat (Mechanical Engineering )
15. Daniel O'Connor (Economics)
16. Amelia Baum (DUSP)
17. Adina Bechhofer (EECS)
18. Joseph Feld (EECS)
19. Yanina (Chemistry)
20. Daniel Lazarev (Mathematics)
21. Christian Studebaker (Architecture)
22. Tal Joseph (Mechanical engineering )
23. Shakked Noy (Economics)
24. James Okun (Economics)
25. Lucas Barros (Economics)
26. Beatriz Yankelevich (EECS)
27. Aaron Thornton (Sloan)
28. Shoumik Chowdhury (EECS)
29. P. Sharpe (AeroAstro)
30. Tamar Kadosh Zhitomirsky (DMSE )
31. William A. Sussman (EECS)
32. Amit Schechter (EECS)
33. Levi Gershon (Mechanical Engineering)
34. Ariel Attias (1. Civil and Environmental Engineering)
35. Rachel Holladay (EECS)
36. Talia Khan (Mechanical Engineering)
37. Nofit Segal (DMSE)
38. Daniel T. Kessler (MAS)
39. Rebecca Boiarsky (EECS)
40. Juan Manuel Escolar (Economics)
41. Anurag Ajay (EECS)
42. Caleb knight (EM / SDM)
43. Anantha (MechE)
44. Pedro Martinez-Bruera (Economics)
45. Jackson Mejia (Economics)
46. Avigail Gilad (SA+P)
47. Trevor Long (AeroAstro)

48. Ethan Benderly-Kremen (Materials Science and Engineering )
49. Jesse Michel (CSAIL)
50. Thomas Cohn (EECS)
51. Seiji Shaw (EECS)
52. Cindy Zhang (Sloan)
53. Nicholas Ezra Pfaff (EECS)
54. Zachi Attia (Sloan)
55. Conor Perks (NSE)
56. Matthew Radzihovsky (EECS)
57. Daniel Schaffer (CSB)
58. Thomas Lee (IDSS)
59. Hyung Ju Suh (EECS)
60. Adi Kupersmidt (DUSP)
61. James McGreivy (Physics)
62. Logan Weber (EECS)
63. Joshua Engels (EECS)
64. Elinor Poole-Dayyan (Media Arts and Science)
65. Hugh Smith (Materials Science and Engineering)
66. Yovel Lendner (Biology)
67. Mitchell Harris (Mathematics )
68. Ava Waitz (DMSE)
69. Arielle Weinstein (Biology)
70. Alexa Gomberg (Biology )
71. Kristen Petrenko (Sloan)
72. Andrew Stasiuk (NSE)
73. Idan Shenfeld (EECS)
74. Alex Amice (EECS)
75. Geoffrey Svensson (Aero Astro)
76. Peter werner (Eecs)
77. Gabriel Mintzer (EECS)
78. Jacob Mack (DMSE )
79. Kevin Qian (Chemistry )
80. Duc Hoang (Physics)
81. Isaac Harris (EECS)
82. William Harris (Mechanical Engineering)
83. Eric Moreno (Physics)
84. Erick Fuentes (Aero/Astro)
85. Jeff Krupa (Physics)
86. Savva Morozov (EECS)
87. Cora Natalia Barrett (Physics)
88. Henrik Dahl Pinholt (Physics)
89. Daniel Chu (Chemical Engineering)

90. Peyman Shahidi (Sloan)
91. Amelia Cavallaro (Course 22, Nuclear Science & Engineering)
92. Adam Gebner (Course 2 + 15)
93. Felix Knollmann (Physics)
94. Skylar Dannhoff (physics)
95. Daniel Mayer (Physics)
96. Jiaruo li (Physics )
97. Florian Koehler (EECS)
98. Gefen Baranes (Physics)
99. Anastasiya Grebin (Biological engineering)
100. Itamar Chinn (EECS)
101. Jeremy Wohlwend (EECS)
102. Ahmet Kemal Demir (Physics)
103. Natasha Stamler (Mechanical Engineering)
104. Alex Ungar (EECS)
105. Gad Zuretz (Sloan)
106. Eden Adler (EECS)
107. Avinoam Singer (Biology)
108. Tally Portnoi (EECS)
109. Camilla Sazoia (EECS)
110. Peter Holderrieth (EECS)
111. Karen Yang (EECS)
112. Ariel Flasterstein (Sloan)
113. Idan Shenfeld (EECS)
114. Nicole Vereczkey (Sloan)
115. Adam Block (Mathematics)
116. Tomer Shoher-Levy (Sloan)
117. Itay Fayer (Biology)
118. David Rower (Physics)
119. Maya Makarovsky (Sloan)
120. Alexa Katz (Sloan)
121. Itai Levin (Biological Engineering)
122. Samuel Tenka (EECS)
123. Jessica Fry (Physics)
124. Matias Umaschi (Sloan)
125. Rotem Shmuel (Sloan)
126. Daniel Pickard (AeroAstro)
127. Michael Fernandez (MechE)
128. Lauren Chai (Mechanical Engineering)
129. Lokesh Sangabattula (DMSE)
130. Yinjing Xi (EECS)
131. Daniel Sellers (BioE)

132. David Mayo (EECS)
133. Daniel Pickard (Aerospace Engineering )
134. Tuval Danenberg (Economics)
135. Wenhao Xu (MechE)
136. Bernhard Paus Graesdal (EECS)
137. Audrey Saltzman (Nuclear Science and Engineering )
138. Jeffrey Wang (Nuclear Science and Engineering)
139. Andrey Bryutkin (Mathematics)
140. Zhi Kai Tio (Chemical Engineering)
141. Jacob Adams (Nuclear Science and engineering)
142. Roei Dery (Physics)
143. Adam Wei (EECS)
144. Adam Block (Mathematics)
145. Eliana Feygin (DMSE)
146. André Fonseca (Physics )
147. Dominika Durovcikova (Physics)
148. Ishaan Parikh (Sloan)
149. Carl Gustav Gleske (Sloan)
150. Luca Frederic Beaujean (Sloan)
151. Jan Hofman (Sloan)
152. Kevin Schurr (Sloan)
153. Mathis Weigel (Sloan)
154. Reuben Allen (Chemistry)
155. Anji Zhang (Chemistry)
156. Daniel Sheen (EECS)
157. Nathan Morgan (ChemE)
158. Anna Ferdinand (Physics)
159. Maya Chatteraj (Chemistry)
160. Benjamin S. Manning (Sloan)
161. Chanan Sessler (Chemistry)
162. Archie Stewart (Chemistry)
163. Victoria Gomerding (Chemical Engineering)
164. Jenna Fromer (Chemical Engineering)
165. Aditya Agarwal (EECS)
166. Bipasha Sen (EECS)
167. Yoni Friedman (EECS)
168. Joshua Ramette (Physics)
169. Noah Golowich (EECS)
170. Daniel DeSantis (EECS)



