

Alameda County Divests from Caterpillar in Response to Human Rights Violations

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OAKLAND, CA - In a significant win for human rights, Alameda County has initiated the process of divesting \$32 million in public funds from Caterpillar Inc. Caterpillar, the world's largest manufacturer of construction equipment, has long faced criticism for its equipment's role in the destruction of Palestinian homes, infrastructure, and agriculture, as well as in the U.S. prison-industrial complex, border militarization, and immigration detention centers.

Alameda County's divestment follows months of advocacy led by Bay Area Divest!, a broad coalition of constituents who oppose the investment of public funds in companies that enable or profit from war, oppression, or environmental destruction. Bay Area Divest! channeled widespread support through petitions signed by over a thousand residents along with endorsements from faith leaders and more than 80 unions, businesses, and civic organizations. **Supporters called on Treasurer Henry Levy to address Caterpillar's history of profiting from harm, leading to the sale of two out of the three Caterpillar bonds held by Alameda County as of writing** (with the third and final sale in progress).

"This divestment is a victory not only for Palestinian communities, but for all marginalized people being impacted by Caterpillar equipment at home and abroad," said Aline B., an Alameda County resident of Palestinian descent and representative of Bay Area Divest! **"It reflects our shared values and sends a clear message that our tax dollars will not support corporations that profit from war, apartheid, and systemic oppression."**

The United Nations' September 2024 directive calls for accountability to end the illegal occupation in Palestine. Additionally, the International Court of Justice emphasizes that failing to act makes states complicit in these abuses. "The International Court of Justice's opinion extends beyond governments and corporations, urging individuals and institutions alike to act—just as the Boycott, Divest, Sanction (BDS) movement did in ending apartheid in South Africa," said economist Michelle Williams, another representative from Bay Area Divest!. "Failing to divest makes states complicit in these abuses and undermines international efforts for justice."

Alameda County joins a growing number of governments, institutions, and organizations worldwide that have divested from Caterpillar in protest of its role in human rights violations. Norway's largest pension fund, KLP, divested \$69 million from Caterpillar in June 2024, citing an "unacceptable risk of complicity in human rights violations." Religious groups, including the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Episcopal Church, and The Church of England, as well as cities like Somerville, Massachusetts, and educational institutions like DePaul University, have similarly divested from the company. Locally, Alameda County follows the lead of the Hayward City Council, which divested \$1.6 million from Caterpillar, Intel, Chevron, and Hyundai in response to community demands in January.

"Our success shows that divestment is not just a tool for accountability—it's a way to reshape public expectations and redefine what we collectively accept as just and ethical," continued Michelle Williams. "By challenging corporations like Caterpillar, we are paving the way for a future where human rights are non-negotiable. **This victory is a testament to the power of collective action, and we call on communities to continue organizing to dismantle systems of oppression and challenge corporate and institutional complicity.**"