

Divestment passes

Read about the previous Student Government meeting concerning divestment here: [SJP resolution ruled 'unconstitutional' by University of Toledo SG](#)

Shouts of joy and excitement erupted from the supporters of the divestment resolution as it passed in an overwhelming majority vote of 21-4 during the weekly University of Toledo Student Government meeting.

At the start of the meeting, 94 attendees were present, not including the 27 senators and 7 SJC members in attendance. Five uniformed officers were also present throughout the room.

The senate heard speakers from numerous organizations. Representatives from Students for Justice in Palestine, UT Hillel, Community Solidarity Response Network, Christians United for Israel, and Jewish Voices for Peace, among several others, gave their opinions on the renewed divestment resolution being proposed at the meeting.

The speakers talked from a few seconds to several minutes over almost two hours. Two speakers, Rob Vincent and Sam Aburaad, were asked to sit down after overstepping the boundaries of open floor.

SG President Clayton Notestine encouraged senators to vote yes or no rather than abstaining.

“Vote yes or vote no. You can choose which one you believe in, but stand by your choice. You can choose to go and abstain and not vote at all, but I am imploring that you go ahead and make a decision to stand up for what you believe in, and vote yes or vote no,” Notestine said.

Those in support of the resolution spoke on the human rights violations against Palestinians by Israel, and were supported by members of numerous outside student organizations and religious institutions. Anecdotes, personal testimonies and statistics were all used as support for the resolution.

Robbie Abdelhoq, SJP steering committee member, spoke about his time spent in Gaza, focusing on an encounter with some of the boys from the host family he was living with.

“The young men had become accustomed to frequent raids and random house searches in the middle of the night by the Israeli occupation forces,” Abdelhoq said. “They had become so frustrated with spending night after night – sometimes in the winter, sometimes not – in the middle of the street in their pajamas that they began to remain dressed all day and throughout the night.”

Derek Ide, SJP steering committee member, said Israel is not being singled out by the resolution.

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– Derek Ide, SJP steering committee member

Ide also criticized the statements by the opposition that they were pro-Palestinian.

“To ignore Palestinian voices and to claim that you are pro-Palestinian is not only arrogant and patronizing, but is a pernicious lie,” Ide said.

Shahrazad Hamdah, SJP steering committee member, also expressed her disapproval for the opposition’s pro-peace statement.

“Peace is not the perpetuation of the status quo for your own benefit,” Hamdah said.

Joel Reinstein, a representative of Jewish Voices for Peace, said he does not agree with the claim that the divestment resolution will encourage discrimination against Jewish students, or that the resolution singles out Israel.

“To say that their struggle for survival is about ‘singling out the Jewish state’ is to ignore their 70 years of unspeakable suffering at the hands of a single state: Israel,” Reinstein said. “Demanding that Palestinians address all oppression in the world before fighting their own is just another way of telling them to shut up and accept being erased.”

The opposition for the resolution reiterated their original fears of discrimination against Jewish students on campus. Several students focused on a desire for peace and dialogue, saying a reversal of the decision would be a mistake by SG.

“I’m not afraid of disagreements, but this resolution does not leave any room for the civil dialogue that we so desire and encourage on and off campus,” said Jacob Ritchart, a freshman at UT.

Ritchart also said Israeli citizens have also been attacked, and talked about a specific instance in which rockets were fired at Israel from Gaza.

Jessica Moses, president of UT Hillel, said she fears the

resolution will encourage discrimination against Jewish students on campus and limit dialogue.

"I believe that the honest discussion should be taking place, but by voting yes on this resolution today, you are taking this option off the table," Moses said.

According to Moses, the reversal of SJC's decision on the resolution's constitutionality "undermines the function of Student Government."

Kelly Market, president of Christians United for Israel, agreed and said "a change in the outcome of the vote tonight from anything other than a decision consistent with last week's decision would make a mockery out of Student Government by proving that our senators can be intimidated into changing their vote."

Sara Federman, a member of Hillel, said voting for divestment would mean supporting Israel's destruction.

"The boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement that this resolution is a part of seeks the destruction of the state of Israel, and the homeland of the Jews. If the senate chooses to pass this resolution, the University of Toledo becomes part of the international effort to see the elimination of Israel, the world's only Jewish state," Federman said.

A motion to vote on the resolution by secret ballot failed. Notestine said voting by secret ballot is in violation of Ohio's Open Meetings Act, an issue that members of SJP brought to his attention. Shortly afterwards the senators voted by standing up at their place in favor of yes or no, and the resolution was passed.

"I feel it was unfair, just the advantages they [SJP] may have been given today," Moses said. She went on to say Hillel has no current plans considering the divestment resolution, but they may campaign if a referendum on the issue is proposed.

“Yes, this is definitely a little bit of a loss, but we wake up tomorrow, we are going to be the same organization that we were. We don’t have one sole purpose like SJP does,” Moses said. “We are a safe place for Jewish students on campus, and we will continue to do so by giving many more events than just debates in Student Government.”

SJP wants the debate on the issue to be an “open, democratic, transparent process,” according to Ide, who said the next step in the divestment campaign is a referendum. “We believe the entire student body should vote on it regardless, but we wanted to have this battle first in Student Government.”

Correction: This story was updated to correctly attribute a quote to Jessica Moses, which was formerly attributed to Sara Federman.