

Minutes:

I. Call to order

- a. President Jack Leff called to order the Meeting of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate Meeting at 5:30pm on **October 7, 2021** on Zoom.

II. Sign-in

- a. Senators signed in via Google Forms.

III. Housekeeping

IV. Approval of agenda

- a. President Leff read this Meeting's agenda. The agenda was passed.

V. CUS Resolution 2021-22A.

- a. After hearing no objections to the Resolution, a motion was heard to waive the right to comment. The motion was approved.

VI. Old Business (see details below for vote counts, amendments, and debates)

a. GPSS Bylaws

- i. President Leff asked for any comments regarding the new GPSS Bylaws and called for a vote. The vote passed.

b. GPSS Resolution 2021-22K

- i. President Leff read the Resolution to end prison labor contracts and reform hiring practices and called for a vote. The vote passed.

c. GPSS Resolution 2021-22L

- i. President Leff read the Resolution to defund campus police and called for a vote. The vote passed.

d. GPSS Resolution 2021-22M

- i. President Leff read the Resolution to repurpose the Threat Assessment Task Force and reduce student surveillance and called for a vote. The vote passed.

VII. New Business

- a. President Leff gave remarks about the anti-semitism he and others have experienced regarding Resolution 2021-22N3.

b. GPSS Resolution 2021-22N1

- i. President Leff read the Resolution to divest from fossil fuels.

c. GPSS Resolution 2021-22N2

- i. President Leff read the Resolution to divest from carceral corporations.

d. GPSS Resolution 2021-22N3

- i. President Leff read the Resolution to divest in compliance with the Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions Movement and read graduate student comments on the Resolution that were submitted ahead of the Meeting.
- ii. President Leff read letters for and against the Resolution submitted before the Meeting. Letter authors' names were kept confidential. 19 letters for and 3 letters against were submitted. President Leff read one of each.
- iii. Senator motioned to read the Resolution aloud in full. The motion carried, and President Leff read the Resolution aloud, fully.
- iv. Senator motioned to table Resolutions O-R for next Meeting. The motion carried.
- v. Senator motioned to extend the Meeting by 30 minutes. The motion carried.
- vi. President Leff motioned to extend the meeting by 15 minutes. The motion carried.
- vii. President Leff motioned to extend the Meeting by another 15 minutes. The motion carried.

New business for next week is on the [website](#).

VIII. Adjournment

- a. President Leff adjourned the meeting.

Vote Results:

K: 43 yes ; 6 no ; 6 abstain

L: 33 yes ; 14 no ; 8 abstain

M: 46 yes ; 5 no; 4 abstain

Bylaws: 52 yes; 1 no ; 2 abstain

5:38 quorum and Meeting Start

VOTE: To adopt minutes > 39 yes; 1 abstain > **Vote Carries**

>CUS Resolution [Parking and Transportation]

VOTE to waive comment > 43 yes ; 2 abstain > **Vote Carries**

GPSS Bylaws:

COMMENT: Typo AAE needs to be listed as AAEC

[the people are pleased with the bylaws. Thank you to Aidan, Ben, Awad, Tom, and the crowd for helping us across the finish line over the summer!]

>GPSS 2021-22 K:

COMMENT: Senator does not support giving preference for hiring individuals based on having a criminal record and encouraged a no vote.

President Leff RESPONSE: I actually learned something interesting about state law in-between these two meetings, which is that it is in fact, Virginia's state policy to ban the box in most cases, this would basically just clear up what is not left by that, which is really inspiring.

VP Fox RESPONSE: This Resolution has already been amended as per your comments last meeting [9/23] it now reads: "that formerly incarcerated individuals be given *fair* hiring consideration"

>GPSS 2021-22 L:

[Early submitted comments + Responses on Slide Deck]

COMMENT: Police Departments serve a very vital part of keeping our community safe. If you value the ability to pick up the phone and call 911 especially, god forbid, in the event of another tragic shooting, I strongly encourage that you think about that and what that would mean for for our campus of not having police.

President Leff RESPONSE: Alex S. Vitale's book *The End of Policing* [in appendices] notes that police often show up after the shooting has concluded and that police have not prevented a

school shooting since they arrived in HS and college environments. I highly encourage folks to read the appendix documents for more discussion.

Senator RESPONSE: Shared a story about a student that died in the campus shooting. Noted that they took the active shooter training after this occasion, and that the trainers actually tell you that the police cannot get there in time to stop the shooter. They tell you to either run away or fight for your life. Police on campus have not stopped school shootings. It just increases arrests of minority students. I don't really think that basis makes for a good argument.

Senator COMMENT: Thanks for clarifying the whereas clause in the rewrite on 'defund'.

President Leff RESPONSE: Yeah, absolutely. Please let us know if any of the Resolutions weren't to anyone's liking.

Senator COMMENT: Talked to the Coordinator for EMS in Montgomery county. They indicated that their response time would increase by a minimum of 15 minutes to any calls in general.

President Leff QUESTION: Did they say that would be assuming no social service would replace VTPD?

Senator RESPONSE: Correct. The funding provided to VTPD would not be able to transferred like another funding source. So, they would have to give that portion of the money to BPD.

President Leff RESPONSE: The resolution does indicate that transitory bodies will be appointed and supported to help with these issues [in reference to the comments brought up last week on this particular issue of an 'emergency lab response' team, see minutes]. We can add more sources on this in the Appendices or debate that.

Senator COMMENT: I know the sexual violence rates against women are going up, but is it possible the 'knowledge' of there being police on campus prevents gender based violence? More of a mental thing than a physical response by the police or preventing it.

President Leff RESPONSE: We talked extensively about gender-based violence last time, and since then there was actually a United Feminist Movement rally against gender-based violence. And they actually specifically called for non-police interventions. They do this every year and work closely with the Women's Center. They believe non-police interventions are more effective at preventing gender-based violence. Last week we went through the Title IX statistics for VT and RAINN statistics, and the police do very little because people are more likely to be assaulted by someone they know, not a stranger that might be afraid of the police. Important to recognize interpersonal violence. Looking at The Marshall Project in the Appendix goes pretty into the data. The minutes also have a few personal experiences from people who have dealt with VTPD after experiencing gender-based violence. The police have not been effective at reducing this, so we need to be investing that money into programs that actually work echoing UFM.

Senator QUESTION: Would VT lose national funding for not having the police?

President Leff RESPONSE: VT foots the bill entirely with the exception of some grants the police might apply to separately for funding. Accreditation is just licensing that we pay them to get. The university bears the main cost of policing and that's about \$7 million. That's all in the Office of Budget and Finance Reports. We'd be happy to talk more about it or answer specific questions if people go through them.

Senator COMMENT: Just a comment to respond to the question regarding BLM [on slide show]. I think its a misnomer to ask if any one resolution is a response to only BLM and not to

campus life, because BLM permeates every part of our lives, not just the campus environment.
[2 comments of support]

> 2021-22 M

No comments [Early submissions on slides]

Pause for Vote on Old Business

President Leff pauses a moment to share screenshots of some of the Holocaust images and threats he has been receiving online over the last two-weeks. A warning is issued for anyone to step away for 3 minutes and return if they are not feeling up for it. Notes that while political neutrality is a myth, the perception of such is hard to maintain in the face of these images as a Jewish person himself. President Leff notes that this is the worst anti-semitic attack he has seen on campus in the last five years. He has received messages calling him a fake Jew, nazi kapo, accused of blood libel. All of the exec board has received threats to publish our names and personal information online for harassment campaigns. These groups have ignored the actual anti-semitism they have brought while accusing us of antisemitism to shut down discourse -- a common tactic they use to distract from the human rights abuses this resolution takes aim at. When, after several attempts, a meeting was held with this group, they apologized for the hate campaign and agreed to send me the specific problems they had with the resolution. And after this meeting, they continued their antics just 20 minutes above the start of the meeting to try and kill this resolution. If we're going to start with anti-semitism, we need to start with the Zionists. I would encourage everyone in the audience to engage specifically with the resolution and point out what specifically in it is anti-semitic. You are all expected to read the Resolution before coming here. And the people who comment on it need to speak directly to the claims made in the resolution.

>2021-22 N1

Senator QUESTION: I support this resolution and think it's a great idea. But what about the coal boilers? Can we move away from coal?

President Leff RESPONSE: This Resolution is only about the VT Foundation. Nothing to do with campus infrastructure. But the good news is that the 2020 Climate Action Commitment replaced these -- these are no longer coal, they use liquified natural gas. Which is from fracking, so not great, but it's not coal and there's a plan in the works to transition to geothermal or biofuel. The website is out of date. Reading the 2020 Climate Action Plan is encouraged. Carbon neutral by 2030. Please send emails if there are any more questions about this.

Senator COMMENT: Can we have a resolution on updating all of the VT websites? [6 comments support]

Senator QUESTION: Are power plants unionized?

President Leff RESPONSE: No, sadly. We own and operate our own power plant, and we're one of the first universities to do it. So we have a lot of opportunity for energy democracy.

[Links shared in chat for CAC and VT climate docs]

> 2021-22 N2

[See slides for early submitted comments]

No comments

> 2021-22 N3

[Early-Submitted Letters (19 letters for, 3 against before meeting) are Read Anonymously. See full Letters and Comments / Responses at the bottom]

Senator COMMENT: That one source seems to be begging the question

Senator QUESTION: Can we write an open letter to the university after it passes to justify why we passed it?

President Leff RESPONSE: For sure. I won't take any actions on these resolutions though until they pass. It must pass first.

Senator COMMENT: I soooo dislike when someone attempts to use "what about other messed up stuff?" as an excuse to not fix some particular messed up stuff

Grad COMMENT: Antisemitism is antisemitism. It's unfortunate that people don't like the methodology but that's not what they are trying to represent.

Senator RESPONSE: The methodology compromises the information that they present.

Senator RESPONSE: Any researcher has to choose a specific methodology to link their method and their theory to the work they are doing. It's one of the things you need to justify to the humans rights research committees. Because murderous means are never justified.

Grad COMMENT: More than 3 comments were submitted against this resolution, 6 from the psychology department. The comments left out name a number of Palestinian activists. Every vaccine has ties to Israel.

President Leff RESPONSE: Similar comments / sources are always condensed for brevity. Letter was read in full. Double check us if you feel that something is missing. They'll be in the minutes.

VP Fox RESPONSE: Only comments included are ones from verified VT graduate students. Comments need to be submitted 2 weeks ahead of the meeting to have a chance to make the slides, not guaranteed verbatim. Everything else will be in the minutes.

Senator COMMENT: Don't read the chat. Waste of time [1 support]

Senator COMMENT and MOTION: Read the entirety of the Resolution so that anyone who has specific grievances can make those grievances clear as to exactly which components of the resolution they find to be problematic.

>>Discussion:

Senator COMMENT: I'm all about transparency and reading thoroughly, but I'm not going to support this because I want all Senators to read prior because our time is very valuable. And I would encourage those who want to to withdraw and revise their motion to only the last statements. But no, because time and I don't want this to go all night.

Senator COMMENT: I 100% agree that people should read in advance but I teach students so.... [4 support]

Senator COMMENT: This should be a special case, but we shouldn't do it all of the time. Because we do have people that came here tonight to talk about it, so I think it would be good if everyone would actually read it.

Senator QUESTION: How many Senators are here and how many do we need for quorum?

VP Fox RESPONSE: 40 for quorum, 60+ here.

>**VOTE** to read full Resolution 28 yay, 17 nay, 7 abstain > **Vote CARRIED**

President Leff reads the entirety of Resolution N3 before the Senate.

Everyone who has already read the Resolution takes this time to take a break.

> **Senator MOTION** to table remaining Resolutions for next meeting. 48 yay, 1 abstain. **Motion CARRIED**

> **Grad COMMENT:** Not a US native. They see far bigger issues going on than BDS in the world, for example Muslims in China. But there is no BDS for China. Same with Afghanistan. Senate can't take decisions on political or religious issues on a 5000 year-old conflict in a cut-and-dry way. Jewish people can claim Israel as their indigenous homeland and what Israeli people are doing is not colonizing the region. Israelis are holocaust victims and not colonizers and likening it as such is a form of holocaust inversion. This resolution will not reach the Israeli government. You'll only be marginalizing the Jewish community on campus and make Jewish people victims of hate crimes. Comments were not read in their entirety to show that some human rights experts oppose this view and movement. That it furthers division and we can't sit here 6000 miles away and make policy involving the middle east that is difficult to understand and is emotional. Look at the emotions its flamed so far against Jack. And COVID vaccines are tied to israel and microchips and computers and phones and GPS. There are ways to seek peace in the middle east and this isn't one it will just marginalize people.

> **Senator RESPONSE:** Yo Ill support a resolution to boycott china's treatment of Uighars (?). You want it, propose it. [9 Senators support]

>**Senator RESPONSE:** I would love to do that if we can do it in a way that doesn't spread Sinophobia.

>**Senator RESPONSE:** We'll boycott everything, don't threaten us with a good time.

>**Senator RESPONSE:** It isn't a personal attack to ask you to provide citations related to your understanding of Israel's history and the impacts of BDS on antisemitism or to propose alternative resolutions that you see as necessary.

>**Senator RESPONSE:** Also, it was mentioned multiple times in this meeting that it isn't impacting Israeli students at all.

>**Senator COMMENT:** Several senators thank the grad student for sharing their perspective [5 support]

>**President Leff RESPONSE:** BDS is Palestinian lead and internationally supported by Palestians -- grass roots movement. Echoing the chat, we are very happy to expand this resolution to more countries. The book *Unearthing the Past* on Israel's history of manufacturing archaeological evidence. I just wanted to clarify that it's not only the far right who opposes BDS -- although nationalism is right ideologically so I use them interchangeably. But opposing BDS

does not only come from the right. The BDS website addresses your covid comment. If you feel that it wasn't fully represented, please post it in chat. AMTA is not a reputable source, see the slides. [posted in comments at the bottom]

>Senator RESPONSE: Thank you for coming to read your points and talking. I'm also not American. But just because you're not from America doesn't mean that you can be removed from politics in any way just like you can't be removed from religion. I think your comments have done a great thing by bringing the Senate's attention to many more oppressive societies and structures that we can write on and that is going to be great. So, we can totally get on board with what you've given us and focusing resolutions on more places that oppress people. I come from a country of colonizers, but I acknowledge the history of oppression and what we have done and continue to do. [1 Senator supports]

>Grad RESPONSE: Yeah, those points are good. Maybe we can restructure the focus of the resolution to weigh the impact on Jewish students.

>President Leff RESPONSE: That reminded me, I don't think we said anywhere in the Resolution that the victims of the holocaust were colonizers? And I'd suggest reading *The Holocaust Industry* (Finkelstein) written by the child of Holocaust survivors.

>Senator RESPONSE: Thanks for citing your sources.

MOTION to Extend meeting by 30 minutes > 31 yay; 1 nay; 2 abstain **>Motion CARRIED.**
Meeting extended to 1930 hrs.

>Senator COMMENT: I am also an immigrant. What we do here does effect my government. It is not great that the US is not participating in my country. But irrespective of the Israeli government feeling this effect and inflamed reactions, we should have the courage to do this whether or not it is and even though we're just a student government. I understand we might not always have it figured out because we are young and we can always fail, but it takes guts to do this. And I am appreciative of the fact that we are discussing this in this forum. And it's not fair to say that just because we're standing up for it [BDS] and this happened to be the first time we're taking a stand doesn't mean that we can't do it for China, India, or Pakistan. So, we should set the right standard at some point and should have the courage to say so.

>Senator RESPONSE: Thanks for the comment--it's like I said before, that "what about other stuff" isn't a reason to not fix this particular stuff :)

>BoV Rep QUESTION: Admittedly, I'm not up to date on international issues. . .most of my bandwidth is focused on local, state, and university issues. . .but has the GPSS given due consideration to the entire context of this issue, including any possible bad actions by the Palestinian government (assuming there are some)? We seem to be taking a firm stance in a very complicated, heavily debated conflict. . .just want to make sure everyone is more knowledgeable on this than me.

>Grad RESPONSE: They did not include Hillel in drafting this or graduate members and that should be considered a lack of insight.

>President Leff RESPONSE: We did consult many Jewish graduate students but not the ones who have an institutional rule against Israel because we know your stance already.

>**Grad QUESTION:** I just wanted to ask what surveys had been done to see what grad students feel about this issue? Since the position of the GPSS is to just speak on behalf of all graduate students.

> **Senator RESPONSE:** That is the role of the senator. [3 support]

>**Senator RESPONSE:** Implement the form shared to solicit feedback from constituents.

>**Senator RESPONSE:** We have Jewish senators that were voted into office no? When I take certain stances on issues, I recognise that I have chosen not to be invited to certain meetings/issues/actions, etc

>**President Leff RESPONSE:** It is not a required step to put these Resolutions through two readings in the senate by shared governance. Each department is offered two seats in the Senate and is representative of graduate students.

>**Grad COMMENT:** I don't like how the Senate is structured because it gives Jack the chance to rebut all of our claims.

>**Senator RESPONSE:** He's the President (2 support)

>**Senator RESPONSE:** Crazy how Biden gets to do the state of the union address too.

>**Grad COMMENT:** It makes me feel intimidated and reluctant to speak for my fellow Jewish peers. He called one of the comments he received unhinged [1 support]

>**Senator RESPONSE:** I would argue that sending holocaust images *is* unhinged.

>**President Leff RESPONSE:** As a Jew, I'm definitely emotional about the content directed my way that accuses me of killing children. But I was wrong to call that unhinged and I am sorry.

>**Senator COMMENT:** The bylaws state that the role of the president is to act as the chair of the Senate to be impartial and not take part in the discussion. [4 Grad students agree, 1 senator]

>**President Leff RESPONSE:** The articles of impeachment are outlined in the bylaws if you do not agree that I am doing my job.

>**Senator COMMENT:** Many of Jack's comments are made explicitly to clarify misreadings of what the resolutions are intended to do and what is said.[1 Senator supports]

>**VP Fox QUESTION:** Where in the bylaws does it say that? The only mention of impartiality in the New Bylaws is for elections. Otherwise it states: "Executive Resolutions can be introduced by the Executive Board if required to fulfill their duties. These Resolutions shall be deemed to be sponsored by the Executive Board. The President or designee of the President shall act as the sponsoring Senator".

>**Senator RESPONSE:** He cannot be an impartial chair and the sponsoring senator. It's in the Constitution 3A iii.

>**VP Fox RESPONSE:** Noted. I will take over for this Resolution in the next meeting as Chair as the only virtue of my position is not rooted in impartiality. [2 Senator support]

>**Senator RESPONSE:** Good idea, but none of this can go into effect this meeting. Roberts Rules also lay this out. [1 support]

>**Senator RESPONSE:** You have a lot of knowledge on these resolutions and the most important role in that case in terms of responding to the feedback and comments, so it might be better next time to shepherd and respond to comments rather than chair. The context you do provide is very important as someone who has had a heavy hand in the resolutions. It just might help to smooth out the response in terms of what's going on.

>**President Leff RESPONSE:** Noted. Thank you.

>Senator QUESTION: Why's it gotta be an impartial chair? As long as discussion is encouraged which it certainly is, what's the issue?

>Senator RESPONSE: Neutrality is a farce and impartial/unbiased decisions are never made. Impartiality is in regard to one person = one vote in our voting processes.

>Senator COMMENT: A mediator may be good to avoid these sticking points for the next meeting [2 Senators support]

>Senator QUESTION: Can we not get bogged down in how Jack runs the meeting for now? Let's continue discussion on BDS?

>Senator MOTION: I propose a motion to discuss Jack's role in responding, mediating, etc to another meeting, and instead focusing on the task at hand.

> >Seconded

>Grad COMMENT: First year at Tech. Chose to come because of Jewish safety. This last year felt very unsafe because the Hillel center was vandalized. This resolution is proposed on the holiest day for Jews and Jews had to choose between protesting anti-semitism or observing the holiday. Your [the senate?] political beliefs are more important than my ability to get a quality education. I didn't always feel comfortable expressing Jewish identity, and I can't express it everywhere. I came to VT because it was inclusive, and we need to maintain our reputation to be inclusive. It is shameful to target Jewish students like this. Please vote no on BDS.

> President Leff RESPONSE: Just to note that the flag being stolen had nothing to do with BDS or Students for Peace. That article you sent says that correct?

>Grad student was offered the floor to respond but did not take utilize<

>Senator COMMENT: Notice how this is a clarification! It's not a defense! It's a correction of a misreading and misunderstanding. [+1 senator support]

>Grad RESPONSE: If the goal is to foster and protect discourse in academia, which as scientists I think we can all agree is incredibly important, impartiality is crucially.

>Senator Response: I love the continuing discussions on impartiality here. As if we don't all see how false objectivity hasn't screwed every society ever.

>Senator Response: Some of us aren't scientists, we actually study politics

>Senator Response: We are not all scientists. Many of us are researchers in other areas and there is a wealth of scholarship on the ways in which lived academics are never impartial and always political.

>President Leff MOTIONS to extend meeting by 15 minutes until 1945 >> 28 yes ; 5 no ;2 abstain >> **Motion CARRIED**

>Senator QUESTION: Would we be able to enter the names/affiliations of those who were consulted in the drafting of this resolution (or Others)?

>President Leff RESPONSE: No. As you can see from the hate mail we received, we don't want that.

> VP Fox Response: I don't want anyone else getting dox threats.

>Senator RESPONSE: Fair point [2 support]

>Grad COMMENT: Academic boycotts against institutions that publish all types of scholars regardless of their political views are remiss. It harms all academics that are instrumental in the

pursuit of lasting peace. Grad students are privileged to attend a wonderful and prestigious university like tech. So, it is important to care about this regardless of political affiliation or polarization. The authors of the resolution have overlooked this since they are focused on limiting academic scope. This resolution is propaganda. We should be encouraging everyone to learn about Israel and Israeli Palestinian conflict that brings people together on transformative projects. Vote no on the resolution.

> **President Leff RESPONSE:** Please just read the first third of the resolution that addresses these points. And a correction, that is about the Virginia Tech Foundation, not Virginia Tech.

>**Grad COMMENT:** This resolution includes anti-semitic rhetoric by associating with BDS and neglects lived experiences of Jewish and Israeli students. This conversation about academic freedom needs more time and discussion than passing the resolution quickly. Please do what other grad students do across the country like at UCSD where they reject BDS and create a committee to support positive change and education. Please vote no.

>**President Leff RESPONSE:** I just want to clarify the process in writing them for those new here: over 100 grad students, undergrads, community members, and subject matter experts on these resolutions were solicited for feedback. It was important not to only consult my own expertise, although I have published on the topic of Israel/Palestine conflict more than once if you want to read my publications. It was important to reach out to multiple Jewish scholars and experts on the topic including faculty and Palestine experts If there are any intellectual errors, I take the blame for it. And if you find fault with the material, we can talk about that. Lastly, virginia tech foundation is not virginia tech [President Leff provides distinction between these two]. This is also only the first reading of the resolution. If it passes the second, it needs to go all through the commissions and the senates then to the UC.

> President Leff **MOTIONS** to extend meeting by 15 minutes until 2000hrs >> **Motion CARRIED**

Grad COMMENT: I feel that you have been trying to silence those against the resolution and pushing your views on others. I received a rude and biased message back where you were personally being antisemitic and it was complete unprofessional. I want the president to apologize to me for the antisemitism. I'm a student and this is the first time I ever reached out and I feel like it was totally unprofessional and I felt attacked personally. I would appreciate an apology. And also saying that you will make a conscious effort not to respond that way again to anyone.

Senator RESPONSE: This is time to make decisions not to ask for a personal APOLOGY !!!

Senator RESPONSE: You were attacked personally? Did you see the shit that Jack was sent?

Grad COMMENT: Other grads comment that they too feel intimidated and silenced. [2]

Senator RESPONSE: please.

Senator RESPONSE: Hate speech and doxxing are silencing attempts.

Senator QUESTION: How is it being rushed when this is the first reading? This is the first reading.

Senator COMMENT: This is the first reading, this is not being rushed.

Grad COMMENT: Grad comments that Jack is not honestly depicting the content of the emails and threats he received.

President Leff RESPONSE: Do you want me to publish our emails in the minutes? I won't do it unless you consent.

Senator COMMENT: Yes. Definitely [2 in support]

>>**Grad student Consent Obtained. See email exchange below**<<

Grad COMMENT: And I was told don't worry we have other Jews drafting this... you see how that sentence would be problematic.

VP Fox RESPONSE: You were not told that. [Redacted] Would you like me to publish our emails as well? I would be thrilled. [see censored emails below as per Senate request]

>>**Grad did not respond**<<

Senator **MOTION to Adjourn**

Seconded.

Announcement: Please be sending student briefs out to your department. The google form from the other department will be circulated as a good model for how to communicate with grad constituents.

RRO 11th [394: 25-35] was suggested for guidance for Alice to mediate and Jack to shepherd Resolution N3 next meeting.

N3 Comments:

2. There were several comments (in favor and against the resolution) about including other countries to divest from that are also violating human rights. [Discussed in minutes above]

A: Many of our resolutions propose precisely that, either by limiting the military support VT is complicit in providing, curtailing the development of drone technology used in Syria and elsewhere, and by holding the United States accountable for its human rights abuses.

3. - "Which Virginia Tech organizations are subject to boycott and are currently complicit in the with maintaining Israeli occupation and denial of Palestinian rights?"
A: This resolution specifies the VT foundation divesting and actually has relatively little to do with VT itself outside of strongly encouraging adopting the academic boycott measures. Additionally, an audit will have to be conducted to understand the full scope of our involvement because so much of it is opaque, but thankfully BDS offers resources to do precisely that and we have peer institutions (such as UC Davis) as model examples.
4. - "How will the resolution benefit the VT community while reducing the negative impacts on Jewish students and other faith based organizations?" [Working on this. Senators suggested some good ideas such as an open letter, see discussion above]

5. - "Most Israeli citizens, men and women, are required to serve in the Israeli Defense Forces with some exceptions. Will the implications of this resolution result in the discrimination of Israeli students that served in IDF by denying them scholarships or graduate positions?" [Working on this, will re-up in next read]

Q: According to the Amcha Initiative, BDS is associated with a rise in anti-semitism so is this resolution anti-semitic?

A: This claim is pervasive among Zionists and worth exploring in detail. The Amcha Initiative is the only source for this claim and it is a problematic thinktank. In their report, they define anti-semitism in three ways, one of which is "BDS activity" and then claim that when BDS comes to a campus anti-semitism increases. This is the biggest issue with the AMCHA initiative's findings but let me list some others in rapid-fire succession:

- They do not corroborate their findings with other reputable research projects that track anti-semitism closely like the SPLC.
- They do not vet their case studies and rely entirely on self-reported, uncorroborated data. For example, they identify the 2021 Students for Justice in Palestine rally following Israel's illegal annexation of Sheikh Jarrah as "anti-semitic" and I [Jack] was at that rally, as were many other Jewish members of VT, and there was not any instance of anti-semitism. I was even wearing my Magen David.
- They do not distinguish between the political affiliation of anti-semitism and conflate "left-wing" anti-semitism with "right-wing" anti-semitism and how they have different causes. I.E. BDS proponents are politically left leaning and oppose neo-nazis so are unlikely to paint swastikas on synagogues but that data are not disaggregated.
- Compounding the issue of the last point, they do not contextualize their data in relation to political events, such as the rise of anti-semitism following the election of Donald Trump and the emboldening of white supremacists (see: Charlottesville Unite the Right Rally where BDS activists joined with JVP and other groups to fight the rise of neo-nazis. SPLC is a great resource on this issue and identifies where this hate is coming from clearly)
- They have no financial transparency and do not disclose major donors. Look at their financial transparency in comparison to a group like The Innocence Project for an example of best practice.
- In the last page of their 2016 report, they argue that BDS represents an attack on campus free speech akin to what Milo Yiannopolous has faced. Milo has famously been photographed with Nazi memorabilia and has proudly defended pedophilia. He is also friends with avowed neo-Nazi Richard Spencer. So, the AMCHA initiative uncritically supporting Milo is indicative of some major issues with ideological bias clouding research methods.

Comment: Does this resolution impugn academic freedom?

A: We address this through at least 1/3rd of the resolution but ultimately we believe not. Our argument is that Palestinian academic freedom is currently being suppressed and much like the boycott of apartheid South Africa that BDS is in the lineage of, we believe breaking our complicity in working with an apartheid government and having a public show of solidarity with Palestinians, including Palestinian academics, actually empowers academic freedom more than

continuing to be complicit in Israel anti-speech and suppression of Palestinian academics. See, also, Israel's recent anti-speech endeavors: <https://theintercept.com/2021/09/28/israel-palestine-unc-academic-freedom/>

6. Under section 15.2-1427 of the Code of Virginia, a resolution or ordinance shall become effective upon adoption by the governing body. If this Virginia Tech BDS resolution is to pass, how is this public, state, land-grant university prepared to contend with the fact that in the state of Virginia, as so passed and adopted, with a vote of 85-5, on March 9, 2016 under HJ 177 "Anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS); condemnation", in which the Virginia General Assembly opposed academic, cultural, and economic boycotts and all efforts to assault the legitimacy of the State of Israel as the sovereign homeland of the Jewish people?

A: HJ 177 is not a law, so there are no legal repercussions from HJ 177. Obviously, this resolution disagrees with the senate's argument as N1 disagrees with the state senate's support for Dominion Energy and other fossil fuel polluters.

2. Pfizer's CEO Albert Bourla is the son of Holocaust survivors and a longtime donor to pro-Israel causes, and Israel was chosen as the center of their herd immunity study, directly investing money in the Jewish state. Johnson & Johnson owns Omrix Biopharmaceuticals, one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in Israel, every single product made, including their vaccine, has ties to Israel. Moderna operates a major manufacturing plant in Israel, creating jobs for thousands of Zionists. Please explain the ways in which it is NOT hypocritical and performative to support a boycott of Israeli academic institutions, scholarly work, and science, but then willingly benefit from their discoveries, such as getting the COVID-19 vaccine?

A: Well I [Jack] got the J&J. But in all seriousness it is not. I'm thankful for the Pfizer vaccine, but the CEO is one man and there are many medical discoveries we rely on made by anti-zionists and Palestinians that I could pose the same question about. Additionally, this question subtly ignores the ways that Israel has instituted a medical apartheid using this rhetoric around vaccine development, cutting Palestinians off from receiving the Pfizer vaccine and all vaccines (as the U.S. has done by hoarding vaccines) despite Israel having one of the largest supplies.

Email Exchange Plain Text:

Rachel Julius, Mon. Oct 4.:

Dear Senators,

My name is Rachel Julius and I am a Jewish student at VT pursuing my Master of Architecture. I saw GPSS resolution 2021-22N3 about endorsing the BDS movement and calling for an academic boycott of Israeli academic institutions and scholars and am asking for you to

vote against it. Hatred has no place on campus. Jewish students across the country have been threatened by BDS and stood against it, and we will not be silent when it comes to our campus.

You do not realize how real anti-semitism is until you have experienced it in person as a Jew. I have on a couple of occasions and it is truly terrifying. I want to feel safe on my own campus and I know that if VT were to endorse a movement that threatens my safety and rights as an active Jewish student, I would be absolutely terrified and betrayed.

BDS creates the conditions for increased antisemitism. BDS efforts seek to delegitimize the concept of a national homeland for the Jewish people and paint Israel exclusively as an aggressor, creating justification for hatred of Jewish and pro-Israel voices. A [recent study](#) from the Amcha initiative found that colleges and universities where BDS resolutions were introduced saw some of the largest year-over-year increases in antisemitic activity, including threats directed at members of the Jewish and pro-Israel communities and the appearance of swastikas and other racist, bigoted images on campus. Supporting BDS implicitly supports the marginalization and mistreatment of Jewish and pro-Israel students.

Jewish students at VT are already being targeted. The resolution was introduced right after Yom Kippur and was originally scheduled for its first read during the holiday of Sukkot. Last year we had Israeli flags stolen and vandalized from the Hillel, the Jewish center on campus. There is [proven evidence](#) that once BDS is introduced there's an immediate increase in antisemitism. Clearly, the authors don't care about the impact this will have on the Jewish community; we're just collateral damage. **Please vote no and stop this before it gets worse for the Jewish community.**

**Thank you,
Rachel Julius**

Jack Leff, Mon. Oct. 4

Hi Rachel,

Your comment has been noted and will be put on the record. I will say that I am Jewish and worked with many other Jewish people on this resolution and have recently been the target of an anti-semitic campaign by your organization and so am deeply familiar with the experiences of anti-semitism and how it impacts students such as myself.

Best,

Jack

Vote Against BDS movement

Inbox X

Rachel Julius <[redacted]>
to me, gsa

Mon, Oct 4, 5:03 PM (4 days ago)

Dear Senators,

My name is Rachel Julius and I am a Jewish student at VT pursuing my Master of Architecture. I saw GPSS resolution 2021-22N3 about endorsing the BDS movement and calling for an academic boycott of Israeli academic institutions and scholars and am asking for you to vote against it. Hatred has no place on campus. Jewish students across the country have been threatened by BDS and stood against it, and we will not be silent when it comes to our campus.

You do not realize how real anti-semitism is until you have experienced it in person as a Jew. I have on a couple of occasions and it is truly terrifying. I want to feel safe on my own campus and I know that if VT were to endorse a movement that threatens my safety and rights as an active Jewish student, I would be absolutely terrified and betrayed.

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Thank you,
Rachel Julius

Mon, Oct 4, 5:11 PM (4 days ago)

Jack Left
to julius, me, gsa

Hi Rachel!

Your comment has been noted and will be put on the record. I will say that I am Jewish and worked with many other Jewish people on this resolution and have recently been the target of an anti-semitic campaign by your organization and so am deeply familiar with the experiences of anti-semitism and how it impacts students such as myself.

Best,

Jack

Jack R. Leftf (he/him)
PhD Candidate at Virginia Tech's Science and Technology Studies department
jackleftf@gmail.com | 919-656-1264

Reply Forward

Screens

Anonymized Emails Received:

Plain text [this is repeated in the Letters Against Below]:

My name is [redacted] and I am a Jewish student at VT, I am in my 2nd year in [redacted] doctoral program. I saw GPSS resolution 2021-22N3 about endorsing the BDS movement and calling for an academic boycott of Israeli academic institutions and scholars and am asking for you to vote against it. Hatred has no place on campus. Jewish students across the country have been threatened by BDS and stood against it, and we will not be silent when it comes to our campus.

BDS creates the conditions for increased antisemitism, one of the oldest forms of hate in the world and still today account for the highest percentage of hate crimes in the United States. BDS efforts seek to delegitimize the concept of a national homeland for the Jewish people and paints Israel exclusively as an aggressor, creating justification for hatred of Jewish and pro-Israel voices. A [recent study](#) from the Amcha initiative found that colleges and universities where BDS resolutions were introduced saw some of the largest year-over-year increases in antisemitic activity, including threats directed at members of the Jewish community and the appearance of swastikas and other racist, bigoted images on campus. Supporting BDS implicitly supports the marginalization and mistreatment of Jewish students.

Bassem Eid, a renowned Palestinian human rights expert has also called out the harm the BDS movement has instituted. Simply put, this resolution harms BOTH Israelis (off ALL religions, including the Jewish community, the 2 million Arab and Druze residents, among other groups) AND the Palestinian community. For example, in a recent article published in the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Bassem Eid stated explicitly, "Unfortunately, almost all of those so ostensibly dedicated to finding a solution have their own agendas, and these may not be to the advantage of either Palestinians or Israelis. A prime case in point is the boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) movement. As a Palestinian dedicated to working for peace and reconciliation between my people and our Israeli neighbors, I do not believe that the BDS advocates are helping our cause. On the contrary, they are just creating more hatred, enmity, and polarization" (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/palestinian-case-against-bds>). This resolution has been rejected across the United States as being racist, ill thought out, and hugely misinformed. Furthermore, it is rejected by people in the Middle East, who want peace and equality. It is too easy to sit here 6,000 miles away pretending that we understand, but we cannot analyze a 5000-year-old conflict through one single lens that is the current American political climate. This is a complex issue, that blanket performative resolutions will only serve to

promote division, anger, sadness, and alienation. Importantly, it will make me know that I, as a Jewish member of this community, am not welcome here.

Please do not let this resolution proceed at Thursday's meeting.

Thank you for your time,

Alice Fox: Hi [redacted],

Thanks for reaching out. I assure you that this Resolution has been written in careful collaboration with other Jewish people, and that the GPSS absolutely does not condone discrimination, of any type or sort, regardless of heritage, gender, nationality, or creed. Your concerns will be anonymized and added to pre-submitted comments at the next Senate meeting, as is standard procedure for all early-submission comments. If you have additional questions or comments, please let me know. I will personally schedule a time to meet with you and Dean. Surprenant so that we may work to clear up any confusion about this Resolution together.

Best wishes,

Sender Response:

In my view it's unhelpful to tokenize some progressive Jewish community members as representative of the entire local and international community. Frankly, any Jewish person who would condone this resolution is an internalized antisemite. And you're not giving me much confidence that you have in any way considered my email given you're writing it off like "well other Jews support this". You most definitely have not included Hillel in this resolutions drafting, and have clearly not considered that 99 percent of the Jewish community doesn't support this, and using fringe Jews as a blanket justification is truly shameful. I'm telling you it will hurt me and my community and the Palestinian people.

Something tells me you would never respond to any other minority who raised their voice about an issue with such blatant disregard. Your argument is, "well we have one Jew's opinion, so we don't need another one". You would NEVER say to a member of the BIPOC community, "well we have the opinion of a few people of color so we dont need another one". Because that would be clearly wrong, disgusting, and racist. You're trying to pick and choose the Jews that fit your narrative, so you can say this is unequivocally supported. My voice will not be dismissed because you have a couple other Jews to check your boxes. They are not representative of the entire community.

Your job is to submit my earlier comment, not respond with personal opinions. You guys request opinions on school matters and encourage engagement, then you intimidate people participating in a public forum designed to foster civil discourse, which is pretty



Alice Fox <affox22@ui.edu>

Hi [redacted]

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Best wishes,

Alice Fox



ate

Sep 30, 2021, 7:40 PM (6 days ago)



Sep 30, 2021, 9:00 PM (6 days ago)



to me

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Your job is to submit my earlier comment, not respond with personal opinions. You guys request opinions on school matters and encourage engagement, then you intimidate people participating in a public forum designed to foster civil discourse, which is pretty oxymoronic in my view. You're attempting to censor my opinion before it is even considered on the proper stage.

I look forward to using my voice next week, as I am entitled and would prefer that you do not contact me personally with your opinions and justification again. Emailing a minority status privately trying to get into a confrontation by challenging my opinion and attempting to invalidate me is completely inappropriate and disappointing, especially in an academic forum.

Thank you,



From: Alice Fox <affox22@ui.edu>

Sent: Thursday, September 30, 2021, 7:41 PM

To: [redacted]

Subject: Re: VOTE NO on GPSS Resolution 2021-22N3, Resolution to Divest in Compliance with the Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions Movement

oxymoronic in my view. considered on the prop

I look forward to using my contact me personally wit privately trying to get into me is completely inappro

Thank you for calling to annihilate Israel and finally exterminate all the Jews

External



Spam x



[Redacted]

Tue, Sep 28, 1:57 AM (10 days ago)



to [Redacted]

Why is this message in spam? You reported this message as spam from your inbox.



Report not spam



Thank you for ignoring history and all the evils of Arab nations who are tyrannical, rapists, murders, wife beaters, and have sex with animals. Even a high school dropout can Google that and see that it is covered in news sources. Complying with the Arabs to kill Jews and eliminate Israel shows you promote all of the above.

Good for you.

I hope you get the world you want just like Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, etc.

[Redacted]

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

Plain Text: Thank you for ignoring history and all the evils of Arab nations who are tyrannical, rapists, murders, wife beaters, and have sex with animals. Even a high school dropout can Google that and see that it is covered in news sources. Complying with the Arabs to kill Jews and eliminate Israel shows you promote all of the above.

Good for you.

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Palestinian resolution External Spam x



[Redacted] via gpss-exec-board-g
[Redacted]

Mon, Sep 27, 11:56 PM (11 days ago) ☆ ↶ ⋮

Why is this message in spam? You reported this message as spam from your inbox.

Report not spam

Hi there,

I am writing about the anti-semitic resolution being proposed by the Virginia Tech Graduate Student Senate.

Your proposal, in its first line, accuses the tiny Jewish nation of "apartheid, colonialism, and military occupation". These are anti-semitic lies based on fabricated information, falsehoods and untruths.

Israel is not targeting the Gaza Strip, as you state in your 2nd paragraph. Rather, Jews are being targeted by Hamas terrorists. Many Jews have already been murdered by your Palestinian friends over a period of more than 80 years.

The idea that Jerusalem is somehow occupied by Jews is anti-factual and anti-historical, and an unbelievable lie of the worst kind. In fact, a survey of Jerusalem's population in 1844 from the British found that a majority of the population were Jews and Arabs were in the minority.

When Jews pray, we do so facing Jerusalem. The Muslim holy cities are Mecca and Medina.

Given the vicious and anti-semitic smear campaign from your organization, I don't believe you are interested in any truths.

Please know that your anti-semitic blood libel campaign will be opposed with vigor, and -- after you pass your fake resolution -- your names and photos will be disseminated for the 5 million Jews in America and 6 million Jews in Israel to know.

[https://gpss.vt.edu/content/gpss_vt_edu/en/the-senate/resolutions/_jcr_content/content/vtmultitab/vt-items_0/download_1146423932/file.res/\(18\)%20GPSS%20resolution%202021-2022N3%20\(BDS\).pdf](https://gpss.vt.edu/content/gpss_vt_edu/en/the-senate/resolutions/_jcr_content/content/vtmultitab/vt-items_0/download_1146423932/file.res/(18)%20GPSS%20resolution%202021-2022N3%20(BDS).pdf)

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BDS is terrorism External Spam x

to [redacted] Wed, Sep 29, 5:39 AM (9 days ago)

Why is this message in spam? You reported this message as spam from your inbox.

Report not spam

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Bye now.

[VP Fox: I have more, but I'll call it here. Please contact me if you would like to see more beyond this. But the content is all relatively similar]

[End of meeting total letters: 20 support, 5 opposed]

Letters of Support:

I am writing today to express my support for the Graduate and Professional Student Senate Resolution 2021-22N3: Resolution to Divest in Compliance with the Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions Movement. This resolution aligns with other GPSS goals and calls for actions in support of broader values of justice, within the university.

Additionally, certain individuals and groups both within and outside of the VT Graduate Student community are using ethically questionable tactics to try to pressure GPSS senators with accusations of support for antisemitism over this resolution, even though the resolution itself is co-authored and supported by Jewish members of the caucus, and is, in part, based on recommendations from Jewish groups around the world (Cf. <https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/jvp-supports-the-bds-movement/>; <https://jifjp.com/targeted-bds/>; and other references which can be found in the appendices of the resolution itself).

Paired with threats against senators regarding other resolutions, this marks a disturbing trend in attempts to intimidate and mischaracterize the positions of members of the GPSS, rather than engaging with the resolutions on their merits, or seeking in good faith to recognize and understand calls for justice from marginalized communities and individuals. If this behaviour is allowed to stand, it will only invite more harassment and bad faith from outside agitators, rather than fostering real communication and understanding.

As before, I stand by your recent resolutions (2021-22N3) in support of the BDS Movement. Thank you for your consideration of your Palestinian students, faculty, and friends.

Members of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate,
I am writing this letter to express my support for the GPSS Resolution 2021-22N3. As conveyed in the resolution and the resources in the appendix, Israel is an illegitimate settler-colonial state whose historical roots and current standing are entrenched with violence, silencing, and oppression of Palestinians inside and outside of Israel. Palestinian students, that are citizens of Israel, have been harassed, threatened, and imprisoned for speaking out against and/or protesting such violent atrocities being perpetrated by Israel. Being involved in and a witness to the VT student community response to this resolution, It seems that some are conflating antisemitism with acting in solidarity with Palestinians and condemning Israeli violence. As a Jewish person, I am appalled by how some are blatantly disregarding the human rights violations being committed by Israel in order to portray this resolution as antisemitic. Violence, discrimination, and oppression of Jewish people does not justify Israel doing those very things to Palestinians. To stand up to the intolerable actions of Israel is not intolerance, nor is it limiting academic freedom. In fact, it is in the spirit of academic freedom and justice, which is something Virginia Tech supposedly stands for. By participating in the BDS movement, we are globally upholding VT's motto of ut prosim and condemning international abhorrent acts of violence.

I am writing in support of GPSS Resolution 2021-22 N3 to divest in compliance with the Boycott, Divest and Sanctions movement. I support Palestine liberation and Palestinian students. As

someone from a Jewish family, I understand that the abhorrent actions of Israel are that of a state and are not representative of Judaism. BDS is rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is anti-racist and is not anti-semitic. This past year the United States has reckoned with its colonialist past and the ways in which this system is continuously upheld in our institutions, including academic institutions. It is not enough to find solutions in our own country and communities without extending that same care and support internationally. Ut Prosim is not only on campus, not only in the United States and not only when it is convenient. Boycotts are an effective non-violent means of change and the BDS movement has already done much of the work for us. Virginia Tech and academia as a whole must respond to the directed calls of the BDS movement and stand in solidarity with Palestinians.

I am writing in support of GPSS Resolution 2021-22N3 , “Resolution to Divest in Compliance with the Boycott, Divest, Sanction Movement.” I believe that it is our duty both as members of an academic community, as well as a larger national and international community, to speak out and act when injustices are occurring. Additionally, our responsibility to this particular issue is compounded by the continued financial complicity and support that Virginia Tech has with Israeli organizations and institutions. To be clear, unless this resolution is successfully passed and implemented, Virginia Tech will continue to be directly complicit in the systematic ethnic cleansing and political violence of Palestinians by the Israeli Defense Force and the policies of the Israeli state.

After reviewing the resolution and doing some investigation of my own, I completely support this resolution as I believe it contributes to peace efforts that are long overdue. I come from a country that has and continues to face a lot of violence. A country that is surrounded by many other countries that have also faced (and continue to) a lot of violence. This has led to large amounts of displacements, in our country they occurred between cities but we have also had many people come from other countries because of violence. It would be amiss of me not to support an initiative that promotes peace. BDS is not anti-semitic, it is not against a community but against the policy of a government that is actively targeting human beings.

I am writing to you in your role as GPSS Vice President. I am a graduate student here at VT and am writing to express my support for the BDS resolution being put forth by the GPSS.

I support the freedom of Palestinians and support their struggle against oppression and violence. I hope that VT will do the right thing and support this resolution as well.

I am a graduate student at Virginia Tech. This letter is to extend my support to the movement for Boycotts, Divestments and Sanctions against Israeli apartheid. I consider it as part of the larger struggle and solidarity against racial Zionist and capitalist interests that govern and guide the politics of empire in the global stage. Without any doubt, Palestine liberation is the fundamental requisite in any politics against the empire and the racialization of communities in the world. BDS movement, in this respect, seems to really invigorate a radical democratic front

and I think it is a democratic responsibility to endorse and support the movement. I appreciate what you do in this regard and hereby express my whole support for the cause.

I support the BDS and am happy we are trying to support Palestinians. I also support efforts to defund campus police and redirect those funds to other services such as counseling services and the Women's Center.

The BDS resolution is an opportunity to stand up for the rights of the Palestinian people in their ongoing struggle against Israeli apartheid. The Palestinian people are subject not only to Israeli violence, but violence that is directly supported and funded by the United States. As an academic institution, we should strive to support the rights of oppressed peoples all over the world, and the cause of the Palestinian people is no exception. I fully support the BDS Resolution proposal!

I support GPSS resolution 2021-2022N3 because BDS is a peaceful, non-violent response to violence, injustice, oppression, and flagrant disregard for human life and international law committed by a nuclear-armed power and self-declared ethnostate. Pass N3 so that "Ut Prosim" can extend, however modestly, to the liberation of the Palestinian people. Labeling BDS response as anti-Semitic is extremely offensive to those who have to endure actual anti-Semitism.

I am a graduate student at VT. I would like to voice my full support for GPSS Resolution 2021-22N3. I believe that it is imperative that the GPSS support this resolution for the reasons laid out in the text of the resolution, all of which I find are more than sufficiently justified and warranted by the appendices and citations.

In particular, I would like to express that ignoring and rejecting BDS are actions that are fundamentally incompatible with the model of inclusion and diversity at Virginia Tech, as well as the academic model of inquiry and open discussion.

I am writing a letter of support for the GPSS's resolution N3 to divest in compliance with the Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions Movement. I recognize that the senate has received harassment and concern because of this resolution, and I wish to offer support to balance that out. This resolution is important for bringing Virginia Tech's actions in line with its stated values, particularly the Principles of Community and its pride in being a land-grant university. Rather than being "anti-semitic" as the opposers have stated, this resolution is pro-basic human rights for the Palestinian people who have been academically and physically oppressed by Israeli actions. The appendices are filled with information demonstrating violence against Palestinians and constraints on their academic freedom and education. Refusing to take a stance on this is

effectively silent support for Israeli atrocities, which betrays Ut Prosim and our sense of community.

In addition to my comments, I add a letter from a former president of [redacted] and member of my department:

I'm writing this letter in my capacity as a former Jewish president of [redacted]. [Redacted]

I want to respond to the Virginia Tech Hillel's assertions that the BDS movement, and anyone who signs onto it — even if they are Jewish — is antisemitic and, ultimately, I want to disagree with that stance.

First, though, I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge that the BDS movement has prompted a lot of antisemitic rhetoric. Let's not kid ourselves: the comment sections of the JVP and Mondoweiss Facebook pages are filled with Elders of Zion-type stuff and it is hurtful and disheartening to read. But that's not what the BDS movement itself is about, IMO. That's what some people who sign onto the BDS movement think. And yes, activists should absolutely call that out when they see it, and they often don't, and it's frustrating. Even so, Hillel hasn't pointed to that legitimate antisemitism, but rather has chosen to target GPSS members with antisemitic rhetoric and threats on their well being. That is also disheartening, and completely unacceptable.

Additionally, the particular brand of antisemitism that seems to proliferate in left and left-leaning activist spaces is a separate issue from the question of whether one ought to support the BDS movement. To me, it's simple: do you think Palestinians should be genocided by the Israeli military? Do you think they should be prevented from having basic human rights? If your answer is "no," then the BDS movement is your best strategy to stop that. Is it perfect? No. No strategy is perfect. But is it effective? I'd say, yes. And it's maybe one of the better strategies we have right now, on a global scale.

I think you can disagree with Israeli military strategy and call it what it is — genocide — and still care for Israelis. But if you care for Palestinians, you cannot possibly support the Israeli government's treatment of them. And if you care for the well-being of folks in that region, you have to acknowledge that what the Israeli government is doing to Palestinians is straight up appalling, and divisive, and bad for the political and bodily well-being of everyone there. To acknowledge this isn't antisemitic but a form of care and solidarity with folks across space and time. To acknowledge this right now is also to support BDS, or at least to understand why some Jewish folks do.

My name is [redacted] and I am a current graduate student at Virginia Tech. I am writing to express my support for passing Resolution 2021-22N3. The resolution is well researched and the numerous sources in the appendices provide helpful context.

I am writing regarding GPSS Resolution 2021-2022N3 - Resolution to Divest in Compliance with the Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions Movement. As a student of Virginia Tech, I urge you to pass the resolution.

We must stand in solidarity with the international Palestinian community, especially those currently at Virginia Tech, against state violence. Continued support for the State of Israel, tacit or otherwise, is support for a regime which is actively creating an apartheid state. Failure to pass this resolution grants continued legitimacy to institutions and companies which are complicit with the Israeli policy of *Hafrada*, or “Separation” in English.

I want to draw your attention to a statement made by Virginia Tech’s Office for Inclusion & Diversity:

“We seek common, peaceful ground, not hostility or conflict. We adhere to our Principles of Community and the core values of our democratic nation, such as human decency and equal rights. As educators, we commit ourselves to promoting these values on our campus and in our communities.”

The passage of this resolution is exemplary of these ideals and demonstrates our academic community’s support for them.

I’m writing in support of the BDS resolution. The war crimes committed by the IDF must not be ignored. The smears against those who support Palestinian liberation are unfounded. While the situation is complex, accusations of anti-semitism are dismissive and reductive and are often anti-semitic in and of themselves.

I’m a Jewish graduate student writing to express my support for the proposed GPSS resolution to participate in the Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions (BDS) movement.

The state of Israel continues to occupy Palestine and engage in long-standing violent colonialist-apartheid practices and injustices committed against Palestinians, both in the militaristic sense and in the broader sense of structural subjugation and violence. The global

BDS movement presents an effective method of protesting this violence and ensuring that we do not provide financial support for the commitment of these egregious violences.

Anti-Zionism and pushing back against Israel's occupation of Palestine **do not equal** anti-Semitism. The Israeli state **does not equate to** Judaism as a whole. Jews such as myself can be, and indeed have a responsibility to be, anti-Zionist and to hold the Israeli state accountable for its inexcusable actions. To oppose the Israeli state and its illegal occupation of Palestine **is not to be anti-Semitic**, despite claims by some in the Jewish community that anti-Zionism is inherently anti-Semitic - to frame it as such is to simultaneously justify and obscure the power structures which allow the continued oppression of and violence committed against Palestinians by the Israeli state. **Judaism as a religion and as a culture does not hinge on the violent colonialist subjugation of entire populations via militaristic and apartheid-like methods - only the Israeli state does.**

Our institutions like Virginia Tech, which currently does provide significant financial, military, and ideological support for the Israeli state and industries, bear even more of that responsibility to stand against these injustices. At a minimum, we owe that to our many Palestinian and Muslim students, faculty, staff, and community members, which VT claims to support but makes little effort to actually provide said support. BDS is an opportunity to begin to correct that.

We as an institution cannot ignore the violent occupation, subjugation, and indeed murder of Palestinians at the hands of the Israeli state - we must boycott, divest, and sanction Israel and its industries now.

I am a graduate student at Virginia Tech. This letter is to extend my support to the movement for Boycotts, Divestments and Sanctions against Israeli apartheid. I consider it as part of the larger struggle and solidarity against racial Zionist and capitalist interests that govern and guide the politics of empire in the global stage. Without any doubt, Palestine liberation is the fundamental requisite in any politics against the empire and the racialization of communities in the world. BDS movement, in this respect, seems to really invigorate a radical democratic front and I think it is a democratic responsibility to endorse and support the movement. I appreciate what you do in this regard and hereby express my whole support for the cause.

The BDS resolution is an opportunity to stand up for the rights of the Palestinian people in their ongoing struggle against Israeli apartheid. The Palestinian people are subject not only to Israeli violence, but violence that is directly supported and funded by the United States. As an academic institution, we should strive to support the rights of oppressed peoples all over the world, and the cause of the Palestinian people is no exception. I fully support the BDS Resolution proposal!

Letters Opposed:

My name is [redacted] and I am a Jewish student at VT, I am in my 2nd year in the [redacted] doctoral program. **I saw GPSS resolution 2021-22N3 about endorsing the BDS movement and calling for an academic boycott of Israeli academic institutions and scholars and am asking for you to vote against it.** Hatred has no place on campus. Jewish students across the country have been threatened by BDS and stood against it, and we will not be silent when it comes to our campus.

BDS creates the conditions for increased antisemitism, one of the oldest forms of hate in the world and still today account for the highest percentage of hate crimes in the United States. BDS efforts seek to delegitimize the concept of a national homeland for the Jewish people and paints Israel exclusively as an aggressor, creating justification for hatred of Jewish and pro-Israel voices. A [recent study](#) from the Amcha initiative found that colleges and universities where BDS resolutions were introduced saw some of the largest year-over-year increases in antisemitic activity, including threats directed at members of the Jewish community and the appearance of swastikas and other racist, bigoted images on campus. Supporting BDS implicitly supports the marginalization and mistreatment of Jewish students.

Bassem Eid, a renowned Palestinian human rights expert has also called out the harm the BDS movement has instituted. Simply put, this resolution harms BOTH Israelis (off ALL religions, including the Jewish community, the 2 million Arab and Druze residents, among other groups) AND the Palestinian community. For example, in a recent article published in the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, **Bassem Eid stated explicitly, “Unfortunately, almost all of those so ostensibly dedicated to finding a solution have their own agendas, and these may not be to the advantage of either Palestinians or Israelis. A prime case in point is the boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) movement. As a Palestinian dedicated to working for peace and reconciliation between my people and our Israeli neighbors, I do not believe that the BDS advocates are helping our cause. On the contrary, they are just creating more hatred, enmity, and polarization”**

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/palestinian-case-against-bds>). This resolution has been rejected across the United States as being racist, ill thought out, and hugely misinformed. Furthermore, it is rejected by people in the Middle East, who want peace and equality. It is too easy to sit here 6,000 miles away pretending that we understand, but we cannot analyze a 5000-year-old conflict through one single lens that is the current American

political climate. This is a complex issue, that blanket performative resolutions will only serve to promote division, anger, sadness, and alienation. Importantly, it will make me know that I, as a Jewish member of this community, am not welcome here.

Please do not let this resolution proceed at Thursday's meeting.

Thank you for your time,

I would like to submit a comment regarding the proposed Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions movement and academic boycott of Israeli universities and scholars. After reading over the BDS statement and accompanying literature, I do not think that this is a constructive means to support Palenstine. I do not see how condemning Israeli universities and scholars will provide aid to those who are suffering; rather, many of these statements in the past have lead to up surges in anti-semitism - something that our local Hillel center has already been faced with. I am not in support of the BDS statement. Instead, how can we as a community give direct support to Palestine, Palestinians, and others that have been affected by this conflict? Should Virginia Tech students contact our legislators? Are there charities we can donate money or goods to that will help refugees? Are there other ways that we can advocate for a two-state solution? Providing Virginia Tech students with the resources to give support is a more direct way to provide aid than the whole sale condemnation of Israel. Especially as this BDS statement is more likely to afflict local Jewish-Americans than it is to help Palestine.

I understand that this is a complex, tense, and deeply personal conflict and I cannot begin to understand the pain that has been caused to Palestinians. But I also cannot see how creating more hate will help lead to a peaceful end to this conflict.

My name is [redacted] and I am a Jewish student at VT pursuing my Master of [redacted]. **I saw GPSS resolution 2021-22N3 about endorsing the BDS movement and calling for an academic boycott of Israeli academic institutions and scholars and am asking for you to vote against it.** Hatred has no place on campus. Jewish students across the country have been threatened by BDS and stood against it, and we will not be silent when it comes to our campus.

You do not realize how real anti-semitism is until you have experienced it in person as a Jew. I have on a couple of occasions and it is truly terrifying. I want to feel safe on my own campus and I know that if VT were to endorse a movement that threatens my safety and rights as an active Jewish student, I would be absolutely terrified and betrayed.

BDS creates the conditions for increased antisemitism. BDS efforts seek to delegitimize the concept of a national homeland for the Jewish people and paint Israel exclusively as an aggressor, creating justification for hatred of Jewish and pro-Israel voices. A [recent study](#) from the Amcha initiative found that colleges and universities where BDS resolutions were introduced

saw some of the largest year-over-year increases in antisemitic activity, including threats directed at members of the Jewish and pro-Israel communities and the appearance of swastikas and other racist, bigoted images on campus. Supporting BDS implicitly supports the marginalization and mistreatment of Jewish and pro-Israel students.

Jewish students at VT are already being targeted. The resolution was introduced right after Yom Kippur and was originally scheduled for its first read during the holiday of Sukkot. Last year we had Israeli flags stolen and vandalized from the Hillel, the Jewish center on campus. There is [proven evidence](#) that once BDS is introduced there's an immediate increase in antisemitism. Clearly, the authors don't care about the impact this will have on the Jewish community; we're just collateral damage. **Please vote no and stop this before it gets worse for the Jewish community.**

Dear Senators,

My name is [redacted] and I am a Jewish graduate student at Virginia Tech. The Jewish community is already dealing with an increase in antisemitism on campus, including the [vandalism of the Hillel, the Jewish center at VT, in the late spring](#). Resolution 2021-22N3 will simply pour gasoline on the fires of antisemitism. BDS and academic boycotts of Israel do **nothing** to advance justice for the Palestinian people. The only tangible impact they've had on college campuses is an [increase in antisemitism](#) where these resolutions have been introduced. The last time I checked, increasing the presence of antisemitism does not help bring a just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that allows both the Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace with dignity.

Uniquely, I am a Jewish native of Charlottesville, VA. I was home in 2017 when the KKK and the Alt-Right groups attacked my hometown on Anti-Jewish and Anti-black missions. I have seen the traumatic impact this type of hatred and violence has had on communities and Jewish individuals, leading to crime, fear, and distraught families.

Rather than bringing resolutions that will make the situation worse, we should be bringing people together to find common ground and make a positive difference. **This resolution does the opposite of that and makes Jewish students like me afraid to be on campus. Please vote no.**

Jewish students at VT are already being targeted. The resolution was introduced right after Yom Kippur and we're here discussing it on Sukkot. Last year we had Israeli flags stolen and vandalized from the Hillel, the Jewish center on campus. We've already heard someone talk

about how when BDS is voted on, there's an immediate increase in antisemitism. Clearly, the authors don't care about the impact this will have on the Jewish community; we're feel that we are just collateral damage. Please vote no.

I am happy to speak during the meeting on behalf of my community.

My name [redacted] I am a graduate student at VT in the [redacted] program. I am neither Jewish nor Palestinian, but I actively seek to be informed on topics concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Through an educational trip in early August, I had the opportunity to travel to Israel to learn about the conflict. I observed that Palestinians are indeed oppressed and change must occur. One thing that especially struck me was the fact that Arab families were limited to running water only on certain days of the week while no Israelis were under such a restriction. Further, Arabs living in East Jerusalem but working on the other side of the wall had to pass through an Israeli military checkpoint on the way to work every day. I was told that random stops regularly cause Palestinians to be late to work, which leads to less productivity, and eventually termination. The systemic oppression results in high crime rates in Arab neighborhoods and little hope of improving their condition. And much can be said about the Zionist "settlements" in the West Bank that further exacerbate the conflict. Even some of the Israelis I spoke with found this concerning. Yes, I agree that change is necessary.

However, I do not believe that the BDS academic boycott will be an effective resolution for improving the Palestinian condition. Nor do I believe that such an action would represent the values of our university and country. I fear that a boycott of this nature would result in an effort to minimize or mute the Jewish population, and may even result in an increase in antisemitic rhetoric on the campus. Such a response would serve to widen the gap between invested parties, and would erode any ethos we hope to build as a university to positively affect the conflict.

Rather, I'd like to propose that Virginia Tech lead the way in raising awareness for injustice against Palestinians and that we facilitate peaceful, thoughtful, and humble discussions between invested parties. I believe that the university setting is the ideal location to start difficult conversations among people who disagree and together form solutions on our campus that both promote justice and value each member of the Virginia Tech community. Therefore, I'd like to propose that, rather than boycott Israeli-supported student groups and organizations, Virginia

Tech host and promote events such as panel discussions, forums, and speakers that will raise awareness among the general population about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and promote fruitful discourse so that we as a community may take informed and thoughtful action both as informed individuals and as an institution.

Please vote no to reject this short-sighted solution which may have significant negative and unintended consequences, but please pledge to take action that will yield justice and lasting peace.