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## **Divestment backers must be fully rejected**

A few weeks ago, a group of Yale graduates and students launched a campaign condemning the policies of Israel and demanding that the University withdraw all investments from that country. We support vigorous debate at Yale on important issues of the day. But the "divest from Israel campaign" is a travesty of reasoned, balanced and accurate debate about what is surely one of the most serious issues of our time -- peace in the Middle East.

To describe the policies of Israel as a system of apartheid, to suggest that Israel is guilty of genocide, to characterize its actions as crimes against humanity -- as supporters of the divestment campaign do -- are charges both reckless and offensive. Their campaign is a one-sided effort to condemn Israel, nothing more, and their failure to draw even the most elementary moral and political distinctions betrays a lack of maturity and of objectivity that is disappointing in a great university like Yale.

The campaigners make no mention of the repeated terrorist attacks against Israel and of the justified measures that country has taken to defend itself against them. They criticize Israel's human rights policies but make no mention of the country's free press, of its strong civil rights laws, or of its independent and highly respected judiciary. Other nations in the region whose records bear no comparison on any of these issues are totally ignored.

The issue of peace in the Middle East, which the petition being circulated by the campaigners fails even to mention, is worthy of debate. How to stop the awful cycle of terror and retaliation; how to recognize the aspirations both of the Israelis, who have suffered much, and of the Palestinian people, who have suffered much as well and who long for a homeland of their own; how to get the parties to the peace table where the concrete details of a settlement can be negotiated; and how the United States can play a constructive role in the process -- these are questions of supreme importance, on which reasonable men and women can passionately disagree, and in whose resolution each of us has a profound and enduring interest. But those now campaigning for divestment from Israel contribute not at all to this debate. Their distortions of fact, hyperbole of expression and lack of moral judgment must be rejected with the same decisiveness that we embrace the cause of peace and the reasoned, careful and patient search for a pathway to it.

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