

Anti-Zionists at Brown University Threaten to Starve Themselves Unless School Considers Anti-Israel Resolution

by [Dion J. Pierre](#) February 5, 2024



More than 200 Brown University students gathered outside University Hall where roughly 40 students sat inside demanding the school divest from weapons manufacturers amid the Israel-Hamas war. Photo: Amy Russo / USA TODAY NETWORK via Reuters Connect

Brown University President Christina H. Paxson has rejected the demands of anti-Zionist students who are participating in a hunger strike in an effort to force the Brown Corporation to vote on a boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) resolution against Israel and make other concessions, according to a report first published by *The Brown Daily Herald*.

Paxson, who has continuously refused to adopt proposals endorsing the BDS movement, notified the campus community of her decision just hours after members of the Brown Divest Coalition (BDC) amassed on Friday inside an

administrative building and proclaimed that they will continue their demonstration until the school accedes to three demands: putting their BDS resolution on the agenda of the Brown Corporation's annual meeting on Feb. 8, allowing them to lecture the Corporation about it, and announcing publicly that a vote on the measure will take place in their presence.

BDC's resolution falsely accuses Israel of committing a genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. Israel is currently undertaking military operations in Gaza to eradicate Hamas, a terrorist organization which deliberately wages war in and attracts retaliatory responses to areas comprising large populations of noncombatants.

"We consistently reject calls to use the endowment as a tool for political advocacy on contested issues," Paxson said in a letter to the students. "Our campus is a place where difficult issues should be freely discussed and debated. It is not appropriate for the university to use its financial assets — which are there to support our entire community — to 'take a side' on issues on which thoughtful people vehemently disagree."

Paxson added that the students' method of protest possibly contravenes school rules proscribing demonstrations that endanger "personal safety" and that they are making their "own choices." Additionally, she has directed the school's Campus Life office to monitor their well-being and a school doctor has already assessed their fitness to endure prolonged periods of self-deprivation.

"I will not commit to bring a resolution to the February 2024 Corporation meeting or any future meeting of the Corporation," she concluded.

According to *The Brown Daily Herald*, Brown Divestment Coalition buttressed their case for BDS by citing a 2020 report University's Advisory Committee on Corporate Responsibility in Investment Practices — now renamed the Advisory Committee on University Resource Management — which

recommended “divesting [Brown’s] endowment from companies that enable and profit from the genocide in Gaza and the broader Israeli occupation.”

Paxson rejected the report for breaching the body’s mission statement.

Last February, Paxson denounced antisemitism and “boycotts against any country,” an implicit reference to the boycott, divestment, sanctions (BDS) movement, during a speech delivered at the 2023 Hillel International Israel Summit.

Explaining that she often experiences “pressure to choose sides,” with both pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian advocates voicing concern when speakers from either camp speak on campus, Paxson said she cannot choose between them and is obligated to promote free expression so long as it does not promote hate.

Addressing the exclusion of Jewish students from progressive clubs and movements, which notably happened in Feb. 2022, when SUNY New Paltz student Cassie Blotner was [expelled](#) from a sexual assault awareness group for supporting Israel, Paxson also affirmed the right of Jewish students participate in fighting discrimination and inequality and called for “defining the gray zone between criticism of Israeli policies that are not antisemitic, and anti-Israel expressions that reflect and normalize anti-Jewish behavior.” Anti-Zionist protests at Brown have been a source of disruption since Hamas’ massacre across southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. In Dec., campus police arrested dozens of protesters for staging an unauthorized protest in the University Hall administrative building. According to *The Brown Daily Herald*, the protesters, members of Brown Divest Coalition, were taken into custody while spectators chanted “shame on Brown, shame on Brown.”

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