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## **Occupation-Free Portland commends Portland Human Rights Commission for standing by its endorsement**

PORTLAND, OR . . . On November 4, the City of Portland's Human Rights Commission (HRC) met to hear public comment regarding its October 7 decision to endorse a recommendation by Occupation Free Portland (OFP) that the City's Socially Responsible Investments Committee (SRIC) place four multinational corporations — Caterpillar, G4S, Hewlett-Packard and Motorola Solutions — on its Do-Not-Buy list. These corporations commit grave violations of human rights by supporting and profiting from the illegal Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories.

The HRC is guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and based its October 7 decision solely on evidence regarding the four corporations' actions.

That decision was met with extraordinary opposition and pressure from the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, Mayor Charlie Hales, mayoral candidate Ted Wheeler, Congressperson Suzanne Bonamici, and PSU President Wim Wiewel.

On November 4, the HRC listened to and deliberated before a polarized crowd of some 300 concerned citizens, many of them hostile, during a three-and-a-half hour session that, thanks to the thoughtful leadership of HRC Chair Chabre Vickers, adhered to procedural protocol while allowing diverse opinions to be aired. Vickers exhibited remarkable patience and wisdom. Members of the HRC remained respectful and attentive throughout the emotionally charged proceedings.

Palestinians, members of Jewish Voice for Peace, clergy, scholars and other Portland residents cited evidence of human rights violations committed by the four corporations and reiterated their request that the HRC recommend the SRIC place them on the City's Do-Not-Buy list. Opponents of the recommendation were given ample time to express their concerns.

In the end, a meeting that could easily have descended into chaos turned out to be a striking example of civic engagement and effective leadership. The HRC engaged the community in a much-needed and vitally important conversation about our role in upholding the dignity and worth of every human being.

Despite the opposition's attempts to censor and silence any criticism of Israeli policy, the **HRC held firm to its commitment to human rights and voted that its original endorsement should stand**. Despite false accusations of anti-Semitism, fostering divisiveness, and overstepping its mandate, Commissioners reminded the audience that their action was taken in support of human rights for all people and was based solely the role our tax dollars play in corporate violations of those rights.

In his opening remarks at the hearing, Portland Office of Equity and Human Rights Director Dante James, Esq., stated, "Our decisions are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. If there were no

controversy, human rights would not exist. And without that controversy, as a Black man, I would still be seated at the back of the bus.”

Portland resident Steven Goldberg commented, “The Commission’s decision is not an abstract statement regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is focused on our City’s financial support of global corporations that violate human rights. This is the very essence of this Commission’s mission: to make certain Portland understands that the decisions it makes can implicate international human rights, and that our city’s actions should remain consistent with human rights principles.”

Occupation-Free Portland rejoices that the torch of human rights burns a little brighter today.

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