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[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

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زبانهای اروپایی

By Joe Piette

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## Protests in Pennsylvania's capitol: 'Divest from genocide, invest in PA!'

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Members of the Council for American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the Philadelphia Palestine Coalition and Jewish Voice for Peace, along with Arab and Muslim community members and allies, including Workers World Party members, rallied at the Capitol in Harrisburg on Feb. 5. They came from across Pennsylvania to demand that the state divest from genocide and invest in communities. Of particular concern was the state's investment of \$56 million in Israel bonds.



Demonstration on the Rotunda steps inside the Capitol Building to demand end to investments in genocidal bonds. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Feb. 5, 2024. (WW Photo: Joe Piette)

As hundreds of people rallied and marched outside, hundreds more occupied the main Rotunda steps inside the Capitol Building to demand the state divest from Israel bonds and invest in Pennsylvania. Banners explained why the diverse gathering was there: “Fund PA Transit!” and “Fund PA Schools!” Participants wore black T-shirts with “Divest from Genocide!” on the front and “Invest in PA!” on the back.

After 20 minutes of chanting, the demonstration was confronted by a uniformed official yelling into a bullhorn, “This gathering is an unlawful assembly.” The cop told participants they would be arrested unless they left. State Rep. Chris Raab from Philadelphia, questioning the state police official, kept asking who ordered their removal, but the official wouldn’t say. ([tinyurl.com/3t77ts8y](http://tinyurl.com/3t77ts8y))

Despite Raab’s objections, capitol police, state troopers and other police agencies continued to remove the 186 demonstrators, rip their banners away and bind their hands with zip-ties. All of them were given citations and later released.

### **Israel bond investment – ‘ethically and fiscally indefensible’**

If the banners, chants and shirts weren’t clear enough, the coalition’s assigned press spokespeople made it crystal clear in the group’s statement explaining why the action took place: “As Pennsylvanians, we work hard every day to invest in our communities and improve the lives of our families and neighbors — and our government should do the same.

“But instead of investing in improving our communities, Pennsylvania elected officials are giving into special interests by investing our tax dollars in genocide and war by irresponsibly investing millions in Israel bonds. The Pennsylvania Treasury recently invested an additional \$20 million of taxpayer dollars in Israel bonds — bringing the total amount invested to \$56 million.”



**Handcuffed protester Samantha Rise continues to lead chants, as they are led away by police. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Feb. 5, 2024. (WW Photo: Joe Piette)**

Even before Israel’s latest wave of genocide in Gaza began in October 2023, the Commonwealth held nearly \$36 million worth of Israel bonds from over 30 years of investments. Shortly after joining a financial advisory board for the Israel Bonds corporation in mid-October, Pennsylvania State Treasurer Stacy Garrity invested an additional \$20 million. Garrity’s website, adorned with a large “Stand with Israel” graphic, notes that Israel bonds have generated \$49 billion in support for Israel over 72 years.

Currently, U.S. state and local treasuries hold at least \$1.6 billion in Israel bonds, with over \$1 billion of that raised since October 7. ([tinyurl.com/4ws57ptz](https://tinyurl.com/4ws57ptz))

The coalition says that Garrity’s decision to invest public funds in Israel bonds is “both ethically and fiscally indefensible. Stacy Garrity should invest in improving the lives of our communities — not gambling our taxpayer money to appease special interest groups.

“This money directly enables the Israeli military and government to commit genocide of Palestinians and oppress Palestinians by upholding a brutal, separate-and-unequal apartheid system. The Israeli military has used these funds to kill over 27,000 Palestinians

in this recent genocidal assault, with half being children. Pennsylvanians want our government to invest in our communities — not genocide and war.”

### **Peoples’ investment portfolio**

While the occupation was occurring in the Rotunda, outside demonstrators gathered near the Capitol Building fountain where they rallied to demand that Garrity and the state legislature invest taxpayers’ money in programs that would benefit their communities — not in genocide of Palestinians and war.

The rally displayed 12 connected placards, each 6 feet tall and 3 feet wide, with “THE PEOPLE’S INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO” written across the top. Each placard identified a funding area — housing, education, food security, etc. — with space below for participants to write in their specific priorities.

The demonstrators attempted to bring the placards into the Capitol Building, only to find all the doors locked. Undeterred, the protesters marched to the Treasury Building where Garrity has her offices and lined up the placards with their demands in the circular plaza in front of the building.

Pennsylvanians demand: Not another dime for genocide, not another dime for Israel Bonds!

*Betsy Piette contributed to this article.*

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