

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Community Advocates Call out Attorney-General For Abuse of Power  
By Interfering in Local Decisions**

*On June 4th, 2024 Cuyahoga County Council introduced a resolution to urge the investment advisory committee to cease future investments in foreign debts, including Israel Bonds. Community advocates acquired a letter sent that same day by Attorney General Yost attempting to interfere in local county business by telling council they are not allowed to make their own decisions, and stating that “Ohio stands with Israel.” The community responded by telling Yost to butt out of county business. Both letters are attached to this email.*

On Tuesday, June 11, 2024, the Cleveland No New Bonds campaign asked Ohio Attorney-General Dave Yost to cease pressuring the Cuyahoga County Executive and Council to abandon proposed Resolution R2024-0208. If passed by the County Council, the resolution would end the practice of investing County funds in foreign debt instruments, including bonds sold by the state of Israel.

The Council is considering the resolution in response to a request by the Cleveland Palestine Advocacy Community (CPAC), sponsor of No New Bonds, seeking an end to using Cuyahoga County tax revenues to support the ongoing Israeli genocide of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Cuyahoga County has some \$16 million tied up in Israel Bonds, the proceeds of which support, among other general governmental functions in Israel, the Israel Defense Force’s horrifying invasion of Gaza now in its eighth month.

In the letter, authored by Toledo attorney Terry Lodge and CPAC lawyers, the organization scolded Mr. Yost for incorrectly accusing the Cuyahoga Council of seeking “divestiture” of Israel Bonds. The resolution states, instead, that the County will purchase no Israel Bonds in the future, not that it will liquidate those it presently owns.

Attorney-General Yost also maintains that if the Cuyahoga Council stops purchasing Israel Bonds, the County will violate Ohio’s law that supposedly forbids government-supported boycotts against Israel. CPAC pointed out that the 2016 statute (O.R.C. § 9.76) explicitly allows the County to refuse to invest in foreign debts so long as an across-the-board blanket policy.

CPAC reminded the Attorney-General that as a charter county, Cuyahoga County has unique constitutional and statutory powers giving the County Council exclusive discretion to decide how to invest public money and write county contracts. The group criticized Mr. Yost for “trying to rewrite the uniform depository statute to make it so that Cuyahoga County is powerless to redirect investment of county monies, and you’re doing it by misrepresenting what the anti-boycott law clearly makes legal.” CPAC warned that Mr. Yost that his “unwarranted and uninformed bullying” was “interfering in perfectly proper local legislative deliberations,” and asked that he “please cease interfering in local democracy in Cuyahoga County.”

“There’s no small irony in the fact that the Attorney-General recently joined in a friend-of-the-court brief in a case before the US Supreme Court where he argues that federal agencies have no power to interpret the statutes they must enforce, while here in Ohio he takes it upon himself to rewrite laws that he has no power to directly enforce,” said Lodge. “His oblivious intrusion into Cuyahoga County business is unwelcome, and he really should butt out.”

Israel Bonds are unrestricted loans to the government of Israel which directly support Israeli apartheid, military infrastructure, ongoing occupation, illegal settlement expansion, and now Israel’s ongoing genocide & forced famine. Cuyahoga County has one of the largest investment portfolios in Israel Bonds of any county in Ohio. Ohio has one of the largest investments in Israel Bonds in the nation. Cuyahoga County maintains a \$16 million dollar portfolio in Israel Bonds. 100% of Cuyahoga County’s allowable foreign investments are in Israel Bonds. The Ohio Treasury holds \$262.5 million in Israel Bonds, with \$30 million bought in February, and another \$15 million in March.

Contact For Cleveland Palestine Advocacy Community:

- For questions related to legal analysis of O.R.C. § 9.76 and the letter sent to the Ohio AG, please refer to Terry J. Lodge, Esq., [lodgelaw@yahoo.com](mailto:lodgelaw@yahoo.com)
- For questions related to the No New Bonds campaign and ongoing CPAC efforts, please refer to Shereen Naser, Ph.D., [nasersc@gmail.com](mailto:nasersc@gmail.com)