



Q&A ON BOYCOTTS AND DIVESTMENT

Q. What is Amnesty's position on boycotts and divestment?

In general, Amnesty International does not support boycotts. Boycotts are seldom effective, and in some cases may result in new human rights problems, even as they are solving others - especially among vulnerable populations that are dependent on an industry for economic development. Because of the challenges inherent in assessing whether a boycott will achieve its desired outcome, Amnesty recommends other strategies (see below) to press for change within companies.

That said, in extremely rare and select cases AI may initiate/support boycotts of companies. The conditions for such action are specific and include that:

- the company must be involved in grave human rights abuses covered by AI's oppositional mandate.
- AI's own research must conclude that the company is involved in those abuses.
- The decision to boycott must be approved at the highest level of the organization.

Regarding divestment, Amnesty is reviewing this subject but has no position at this time.

In the history of Amnesty International, a boycott or divestment campaign has never been undertaken. In light of the above, Amnesty members and groups should not recommend boycott or divestment as a strategy for addressing human rights abuses associated with corporate activities.

Q. What types of actions can Amnesty members undertake to address human rights abuses associated with corporate activities?

Amnesty's Corporate Action Network (CAN) develops and distributes a range of actions to help hold corporations accountable for human rights. These include writing letters to company executives, Board Members, and investors; staging demonstrations at corporate offices and other public venues; public education such as film screenings and presentations by leaders in the corporate social responsibility movement, and so on. You can learn more about our campaigns, and sign up for the network online, by visiting our website: www.amnestyusa.org/business

As an alternative to boycotts and divestment campaigns, Amnesty recommends using shareholder activism to achieve change, and has designed the new SHARE POWER Campaign to make it possible for anyone to find a connection to a multinational corporation and pressure it to change – no matter where you live, work or study, and no matter whether you're a millionaire or have only a penny to your name! SHARE POWER has a comprehensive online organizing guide, with all of the materials you need and step-by-step instructions, making it easy to get involved! To learn more, visit www.amnestyusa.org/business/sharepower

Q. What should Amnesty members do when they are approached to participate in events with other organizations, who may be promoting the idea of boycott or divestment, or working on a company or issue that Amnesty has not yet investigated? For instance, the Killer Coke Campaign, or the Divest Sudan Campaign?

It's important for AI activists to only make claims that AI research can support. Yet, sometimes there is

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an important human rights issue that AI just hasn't yet investigated and reported on. This doesn't mean you can't get involved. As described above, Amnesty's position, or lack of position, on these issues does not prohibit you from taking part in events with other organizations, as long as you are clear in any representation of Amnesty (spoken, written or otherwise) that we do not recommend boycott or divestment. What you CAN say is that according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), all organs of society, including companies, have a responsibility to uphold and promote human rights. Amnesty condemns human rights abuses associated with companies, and we expect all companies to do everything in their power to prevent abuses and promote human rights throughout their operations (that is, including their supply chains). One way to do this is by establishing and implementing a comprehensive human rights policy expressly referencing the UDHR and other international standards, such as the ILO Core Labor Standards. This applies to ALL companies, not just the companies Amnesty has investigated, so you can always use your role as an Amnesty member to make an inquiry of a company you are concerned about. You can write (and recommend others to write) to the CEO or Board and express your concern based on allegations, and request that they provide you with information about the case, and what steps they are undertaking to protect human rights. Also, as described above, Amnesty recommends shareholder activism as an alternative, proactive approach to company change – the techniques presented in our SHARE POWER Campaign can be applied to nearly any company for which there are human rights concerns.

Amnesty's aim would not be to derail a divestment campaign by other voices, but to help couch the debate in the development of socially responsible investment policies, especially including positive votes on human rights-related shareholder resolutions. That's where Share Power gives you a tangible alternative to propose. There are heated academic and activist debates on both sides about divestment's effectiveness. When you're speaking as an AI activist, you should be less concerned about convincing other activists that divestment doesn't work, but rather try convincing them that shareholder engagement works, too! If you have further questions, please feel free to contact us at corpaction@aiusa.org.