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## **EIGHT YEARS LATER, VANGUARD SHAREHOLDERS VOTE AGAIN ON GENOCIDE-FREE INVESTING PROPOSAL**

Boston, MA – November 7, 2017 – While news of the 14 year-old genocide in Darfur, Sudan, is rarely in the news anymore, current headlines focus on Syria and Burma, where brutal regimes, like the Sudanese regime, are also committing crimes against humanity.

On November 15, as part of a shareholder initiative by the non-profit organization, Investors Against Genocide, 48 Vanguard funds will have the opportunity to vote on whether they want Vanguard to “avoid holding investments in companies that, in management’s judgment, substantially contribute to genocide or crimes against humanity.” Recent filings show that Vanguard is investing \$1.9 billion dollars in the small set of problem companies that fund the regimes in Sudan, Syria and Burma. Vanguard is urging shareholders to vote against the proposal.

According to Eric Cohen, Chairperson of Investors Against Genocide, Vanguard’s opposition directly contradicts its published pledge to its clients, which promises to “Hold ourselves to the highest standards of ethical behavior and stewardship.” Cohen says, “We have attempted to engage in dialogue with Vanguard to find common ground, but so far, the company has refused to meet with us.”

Based on comments shareholders have posted to Twitter, they are critical about Vanguard’s recommendation that they vote against the proposal. “Check out this recent proxy vote from Vanguard. They are asking me to support investments in genocide! How to make noise on this,” tweeted one shareholder. “I’m interested in the reason why you’re advising I vote against policies to ensure you aren’t enabling genocide,” posted another. “Not a good look, Vanguard,” another tweeted.

Arianna Stefanoni Sherlock, Vanguard’s head of corporate public relations, told Yahoo Finance, “Our recommendation ‘against’ isn’t how we feel about the issue.” In 2009, at the investment firm’s last shareholder meeting, Vanguard also recommended a vote against the proposal.

Vanguard needs its shareholders to participate in this year’s meeting because there are pressing administrative issues on the ballot that require a quorum. So, the firm is reportedly spending \$17.6 million to advertise the need to vote to its clients. Millions of more shareholders are likely to vote, because Vanguard’s customer-base is much larger than it was

in 2009. “With an increase of voting, you’ll have more people vote for [the measure],” said Tensie Whelan, a professor at NYU’s Stern School of Business who studies business and ethical concerns.”

Vanguard’s refusal to implement a policy to avoid investment tied to genocide stands in stark contrast to T. Rowe Price and TIAA-CREF who acted to avoid investments in PetroChina and other companies supporting the government of Sudan. Investors Against Genocide withdrew its shareholder proposal at TIAA-CREF when it [adopted a public policy](#) against investments tied to genocide. TIAA-CREF subsequently [divested](#) holdings in PetroChina and other oil companies that are helping to support the genocide in Darfur, Sudan. American Funds divested its holdings in PetroChina following a well-publicized shareholder vote on genocide-free investing there.

Shareholders approved a similar genocide-free investing proposal at the ING Emerging Countries Fund in June 2012 by a wide margin with 59.2% of votes in favor of the proposal and only 10.8% opposed. Unlike Vanguard, ING took a neutral position on the proposal allowing the views of individual shareholders to be represented without the disadvantage of institutional bias.

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Investors Against Genocide is a citizen-led initiative, dedicated to convincing mutual funds and other investment firms to make an ongoing commitment to genocide-free investing. Investors Against Genocide is staffed by volunteers and is a project of the Massachusetts Coalition to Save Darfur, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization, incorporated in the state of Massachusetts. For more information, visit [www.investorsagainstgenocide.org](http://www.investorsagainstgenocide.org).