

TO: Assembly

FROM:

RE: Solidarity with Palestine

DATE: 23 November 2023

Note from the Durham SU Board of Trustees

Standing Order D15 provides: *"The Board of Trustees shall review motions and amendments for any legal, financial, or reputational risks. The Board may request changes from the student who submitted the motion and, at their sole discretion, may decline the policy, or part of the policy, from being discussed. If they do so, reasoning must be given in their report to Assembly. The Trustees may also require that advice on the legal, financial, or reputational implications are included in the circulation of papers, to support Assembly members in their decision making."*

The trustees would like to thank the proposer for constructive discussion on this motion. The trustees have, however, exercised their discretion to remove one part of the motion, which discussed what may be considered as antisemitic, or not, in the view of the proposer.

This is because Durham SU has adopted the [IHRA definition of antisemitism](#) on the advice of our Jewish Society, and uses this definition when considering whether something may be antisemitic.

In the view of the trustees, the motion set out here is lawful and in order, but it is for Assembly to decide whether it should be the policy of Durham SU. In debate, the trustees draw the attention of Assembly members to the IHRA definition.

Assembly notes:

1. Following Hamas' attack on Israel on October 7th, the Israeli government has reacted with disproportionate violence against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and throughout historic Palestine.
2. The ruthless bombing by the Israeli military has led to over 10,000 reported casualties in the Gaza Strip alone, mostly comprising of women and children, as well as over 26,000 injured and 1.5 million internally displaced.¹
3. The SU has previously noted in its motion Standing in Solidarity with the People of Palestine that *'the use of forced dispossession, grossly disproportionate violence and settler colonialism has been a tool of the government of Israel against the Palestinian people for several decades.'*² The current bombing and ground invasion are an escalation of these strategies and aim to further the Israeli government's colonialist aims.
4. A majority of countries and Human Rights Groups have called for a ceasefire and end to violence in Occupied Palestine, calls which the United Kingdom³, Israel, and the United States have opposed.⁴
5. The British government supports a settlement with both democratic Palestinian and Israeli states based on the 1967 boundaries. It does not recognise the current Palestinian government and has not joined calls for a ceasefire.
6. Durham University's ethical investments policy includes a commitment not to invest in 'armament sales to military regimes.'⁵ It is unclear if this includes Israel. Furthermore, Durham's investments

¹ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-39>

² <https://www.durhamsu.com/resources/stand-in-solidarity-with-the-people-of-palestine>

³ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/gaza-prime-minister-israel-hamas-raf-b2435723.html>

⁴ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/10/1142847>

⁵ <https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/treasurer/DUEthicalInvestmentPolicyfinalisedJune2020.pdf>

are managed by BlackRock, which owns a majority share in, and funds ZIM Integrated Shipping Services, an Israeli company facilitating the current armament of Israel.

7. The escalation of violence in Israel and Palestine often leads to an increase in antisemitism and islamophobia in the United Kingdom. Reports indicate that this is currently the case.
8. The SU has previously resolved:
 - a. *To stand in Solidarity with the people of Palestine against the actions of the Israeli government and publish a statement of solidarity as a students' union.*
 - b. *To raise awareness and campaign for the people of Palestine as they face the ongoing brutality of a substantially more powerful state.*
 - c. *To lobby the University to boycott and divest from any organisation that funds or supports the Israeli government as it commits acts of terror against the Palestinian people.*
 - d. *To condemn the Government of the United Kingdom in its complicity in funding and supporting such acts of terror and grossly disproportionate violence.*⁶

Assembly believes:

1. That the Palestinian people have, as all people have, a fundamental human right to be free from forced dispossession, acts of state aggression that constitute war crimes, brutality against protesters, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.
2. That the Israeli military's current actions in the Gaza Strip and throughout the occupied Palestinian territory have placed the Palestinian people at grave risk of genocide, as many Human rights organisations and UN experts have repeatedly warned.
3. That a ceasefire is necessary to ensure that the fundamental human rights of all people in Israel and Palestine are protected.
4. That a ceasefire and humanitarian approach to Israeli and Palestinian freedom is a crucial step in the path towards preserving human life and dignity for all in the region and necessary for the advancement of true liberation, which centres the dignity of all people.
5. That the abhorrent attempts at dehumanizing all Palestinians through government statements and media coverage as thousands are killed in the ongoing bombing of Gaza perpetuates the racist violence of Israel's contemporary settler colonialism, which has and continues to facilitate genocide.
6. That Durham SU has a duty to fight for the fundamental rights of the people of Palestine who continue to face oppression against the Israeli government, not only on behalf of our Palestinian student populations, but also to uphold freedom from acts of violence against civilians as a fundamental human right.
7. That Durham SU also has an obligation to ensure the welfare of its students impacted by racism, islamophobia, and antisemitism in all its forms.

Assembly resolves:

1. To continue to stand in Solidarity with the people of Palestine against the actions of the Israeli government as was resolved in our previous motion.
2. To publish an official statement demanding an immediate ceasefire, an end to violence, and to the illegal occupation of Palestine.
3. To raise awareness and campaign for the people of Palestine as they face this increase in violence and bombardment from a substantially more powerful state.
4. To increase support for all students impacted by the current violence, including Muslim and Jewish students impacted by the rise in islamophobia and antisemitism in the UK due to rising tensions around the world and particularly those from the affected region, such as Palestinian Education Trust students.
5. To lobby the University to publish an official statement demanding an immediate ceasefire, an end to violence, and to the illegal occupation of Palestine.
6. To demand the University disinvest from any company knowingly involved in international law and human rights violations in the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including

⁶ SU Motion

East Jerusalem. In echoing other campaigns for divestment in apartheid, we demand divestment from any company that:

- a. facilitates the collective punishment of Palestinian civilians;
 - b. contributes to forcible displacement of Palestinians;
 - c. contributes to or maintains the settler colonies within the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem; or,
 - d. contributes to the construction or maintenance of the Annexation Wall in the West Bank.
7. To continue to support the right of Palestinian student and allies' to free speech within the confines of UK law.
8. To coordinate and facilitate student fundraising for affected people.
9. To condemn the Government of the United Kingdom in its current stance against an immediate ceasefire and its complicity in funding and supporting Israel's grossly disproportionate violence in Gaza.
10. To demand the University commit to undertaking such measures as are necessary to ensure that students and academics studying both previous and current conflicts in Israel-Palestine remain logistically able.