

**Paper Title: ‘University and DUSA to call for immediate end of the Israel-Palestine war’**

**Date: 14/10/2023**

**Author/proposer: Tánaiste**

**Position: None**

**Seconder/s: Dani McFawns**

**Position/s: Co-President SHSL**

**Introduction**

[This motion was written at 11:30am on 14th October. It may need revising at short notice by the time the SRC meets on 24th October]

As of 14th October, the University has refused to put out any statement regarding the current Israel-Palestine war. I wrote to the Principal via his PA why we have put out no statement. This was the University’s response: "The current situation is tragic with a shocking level of unjustifiable violence against innocent people. But it is also very complex and there will be many different perspectives on it. For that reason the University will not be taking a public stance on the matter.

Compare this to the swift response to the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The University and DUSA rapidly came out with statements calling for an immediate ceasefire and condemning the illegal invasion of Ukraine. This motion calls on both DUSA and the University to condemn the war, call for an immediate ceasefire and to commit its support for Palestinian, Israeli and other students effected by this immense, criminal disaster.

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| Project name: | Data  |
| Target  | Who are your key target group/groups and what do they need? |  University and DUSA leadership, but also the student body generally |
| Evidence  | What is currently working well and why? |  N/A |
| What isn’t working well and why? |  As of 14/10/2023, the University’s position as put to me in writing from the Principal’s PA is: “"The current situation is tragic with a shocking level of unjustifiable violence against innocent people. But it is also very complex and there will be many different perspectives on it. For that reason the University will not be taking a public stance on the matter." I understand DUSA exec are drafting a statement to “rais[e] awareness and support for students at the University”. |
| Enhancement  | What needs to change/what are the issue? | See above. |
| What do you want to see happen/end goal? | Public statement by DUSA and the University condemning the war, condemning the ethnic cleansing of Gaza, condemning collective punishment, and calling for an end to the blockade of Gaza and occupation of the West Bank. |
| Action | How are you going to engage students/stakeholders? | Students need to put public pressure on the University and DUSA leadership to change their public position on the war. |
| What are your key actions? | A wide variety of actions are possible, from petitons, public demonstrations. I myself have [redacted on request of src chair]. |
| When does this need to be completed by? | Immediately. |
| Challenges  | What could stop you succeeding? What do you need to do you overcome them? | Refusal from University and DUSA leadership to change position. This would require escalation of public pressure. This happens automatically in the case of my hunger strike. |
| Impacts | How will your actions benefit the target group/groups?  | I do not pretend this will end the war, but it will change our public position and improve Dundee’s commitment to the basic principle of condemning war crimes and genocide consistently. |
| Evaluation  | How will you know/measure whether your actions have had an impact? | By public statements by the University and DUSA.  |
| Legacy | How will the impact be sustainable and implemented long term? | We continue to hold the University to account. |

**General information**

I cannot give full justice to the history of the Israel-Palestine conflict in the short time I have to write this motion and would recommend councillors read around the topic. Some excellent concise articles can be found on Al Jazeera [[HERE](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/9/whats-the-israel-palestine-conflict-about-a-simple-guide)]. Briefly, the creation of Israel in 1948 caused the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. Since 1967, Israel has engaged in settler-colonialism in the West Bank with an extensive surveillance and control regime carried out both by the Israeli army and the Palestinian Authority. Since 2007, the Gaza Strip, home to 2 million people, has been blockaded, with access tightly controlled by the occupying power, Israel.

On 7th October, Hamas, the government of the Gaza Strip, launched an attack on Israel, killing, wounding and kidnapping several hundreds soldiers and civilians. Israel immediately counterattacked and has been bombing Gaza non-stop. The Israeli Defence Minister has ordered a total siege of Gaza, allowing in no food, water, fuel, access, referring to Palestinians as “human animals”. As an example of the immediate consequences of this total siege, hospitals have now run out of back-up power, which means all patients on life support, including babies and children, are now dead. As I am writing this at 10am GMT 14th October, Israel is threatening an imminent ground invasion and ordering 1 million people in north Gaza to ‘evacuate’ south. They have also bombed the only crossing between Egypt and Gaza, meaning there is no escape for Palestinians.

The disparity of force is so overwhelmingly on the side of Israel. It is funded by Western, especially US, military aid. Meanwhile, Western governments including Britain and the EU are cutting off aid to Palestine in the middle of these war crimes. The overwhelming consensus amongst the British political and media elite is supportive of Israel, including openly supportive of their publicly announced intention to commit further war crimes of collective punishment and ethnic cleansing.

When Russia invaded Ukraine on Saturday 20th February 2022, by Thursday the University and student union had put out a statement: "It is our sincere hope that, even at this stage, a more peaceful solution can be found to the current conflict that avoids bloodshed and tragedy." A fortnight later, they put out a further statement outlining: "the University’s unequivocal condemnation of the invasion... We must continue to hope that international pressure on Russia will have a positive effect, however bleak the situation may look today."

No public statement has come this time, as we face the real prospect of a genocide, aided and abetted by our own government. I wrote to the Principal asking why we have put out no statement on the current war. This was the University’s response: "The current situation is tragic with a shocking level of unjustifiable violence against innocent people. But it is also very complex and there will be many different perspectives on it. For that reason the University will not be taking a public stance on the matter."

This is totally unacceptable. It is perfectly reasonable for the University to produce a statement condemning war crimes. To give two examples, Exeter University and their Student Guild jointly published a statement [[HERE](https://www.exeterguild.com/article-post/support-for-students-affected-by-recent-global-events-in-the-middle-east)] condemning violence and hate including on campus, Sussex Student Union states they [[HERE](https://sussexstudent.com/news/article/isreal-palestine-statement)] “[stand] fiercely against war crimes, violence and violations of international law in the Israel-Palestine region, including the decades of events that have led to those unfolding right now.” Some universities are publishing opinion pieces from their academics, providing expert information and analysis [[HERE](https://www.up.ac.za/news/post_3188454-up-expert-opinion-resistance-is-dignity-the-7th-october-palestinian-uprising)].

There are thus many kinds of statements that can be made, some more explicitly political or educational than others. But to produce no statement is unacceptable moral cowardice. It is perfectly possible to produce a sensitive and inoffensive statement that denounces war and violence. There is an implication in the silence. I invite councillors to consider, during Black History Month, what the difference could be in the silence now compared to the instant and clear reaction when Ukrainians were dying.

One of the city councillors for West End ward which contains most of the university and most campus accommodation is Nadia El-Nakla, wife of the First Minister Humza Yousaf. Her family are currently stuck in Gaza. This is an issue which effects people across Dundee. Our University should do the bare minimum and use its voice to contribute to peace and justice.

Dundee has a strong tradition of support for Palestine. It is twinned with Nablus [[HERE](https://www.dundee-nablus.org.uk/)] and the University has links with An-Najah National University. A large rally is scheduled for 2pm 14th October in the city centre.

I attach below in an appendix the text of my speech to be read out in my absence at the rally.**[Redacted on request of SRC Chair]**

**Conclusion + Motion**

1. SRC calls on the University to issue a public statement condemning the war, condemning war crimes, including the occupation of the West Bank, the blockade of Gaza, the siege of Gaza and ethnic cleansing of Palestine.
2. SRC calls on DUSA to do the same.
3. SRC calls on DUSA to reach out to An-Najah National University in Nablus, Palestine and offer our solidarity; SRC calls on the University to reach out to An-Najah National University and offer support.

**Appendix:**

Text of speech to be delivered at the Palestine solidarity rally in Dundee 14th October.

I am in England and am unable to be here. Thank you to my comrades for reading this out for me.

My name is TAW-nish-ta (Tánaiste) I'm a 3rd year Community Education student at the University of Dundee. I remember when Russia invaded Ukraine on Saturday 20th February 2022, by Thursday my university and student union had put out a statement: "It is our sincere hope that, even at this stage, a more peaceful solution can be found to the current conflict that avoids bloodshed and tragedy."

A fortnight later, they put out a further statement outlining: "the University’s unequivocal condemnation of the invasion... We must continue to hope that international pressure on Russia will have a positive effect, however bleak the situation may look today."

No public statement has come this time, as we face the real prospect of a genocide, aided and abetted by our own government and so-called Leader of the Opposition. I directly asked the Principal why we have put out no statement. This was the University’s response: "The current situation is tragic with a shocking level of unjustifiable violence against innocent people. But it is also very complex and there will be many different perspectives on it. For that reason the University will not be taking a public stance on the matter."

I have no words for this act of moral cowardice. No words. What is complex about ethnic cleansing? What is complex about collective punishment? Which syllable of genocide do they need repeating? I saw a tweet which summed it up so well: "Universities be like 'We support genocide and apartheid. Please seek mental health support.'"

The leadership of my university are making the judgment that it is not in their institutional interest to even condemn genocide. Perhaps they are right. Perhaps the balance of power and PR is that actually to remain silent is in Dundee University’s best interest.

Our task as students is to change their calculation by all means available to us. There are many methods available. We have a student council and student union. They can be used. We can organise mass letters. And other tactics exist.

Our cause is moral, is just, and is seen to be so by the majority of students and staff at my university. They are waiting to be stirred at action, to be mobilised, to be quickened. I would like to announce my contribution to this campaign.

[Redacted on request of SRC Chair]

One thing we have learnt so brutally in the comparison of how Ukraine and Palestine have been treated is that Black Lives Don't Matter. The imminent extermination of 2 million Gazans does not provoke our governments let alone our universities, to offer even token support for universal human rights. In the circumstances, [redacted]

I know the University cares about its public image. I gently suggest to them that "[redacted]

I hope that my University [redacted] extends its compassion to the millions in Palestine who, for only the crime of existing, are being hourly killed.