

Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza/War in the Middle East

Proposer: R Reynolds (SSF Faculty Convenor)

Seconder: J Kiffin (PSI YR2 UG)

Amendment proposer: Danny Turner, Ethical Issues Officer

Union notes:

- 1 Over a thousand people have died since the Israeli offensive began, nearly a third of which are children. Nearly 5000 people have been injured.¹
- 2 The UN is investigating claims the Israeli army has used white phosphorus in civilian areas, which is prohibited by international law.²
- 3 Security Minister, Lord West of Spithead, says the humanitarian crisis in Gaza will fuel extremism in the UK.
- 4 That Hamas were democratically elected by the Palestinian people.

Union believes:

- 1 That students, through their unions, have a duty to speak out against suffering and imperialism.
- 2 That the current situation in Gaza is a humanitarian catastrophe.
- 3 That all nations have a right to defend themselves against attack.
- 4 That students are concerned about the prospect of long-term peace in the region and affected by extremism in the UK.
- 5 That students from Jewish and Muslim backgrounds should be praised for their peaceful and constructive relationship at UEA.
- 6 That Israeli action was disproportionate and a blatant attempt to intimidate the people of Gaza.
- 7 That this has put back efforts towards peace in the region.

¹ http://www.channel4.com/news/articles/politics/international_politics/palestinian+dead+in+gaza+tops+1000+/2904372

² http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7831424.stm

Union resolves:

- 1 To mandate the Executive to publicise the United Nations Relief Works Agency and Disasters Emergency Committee appeals for donations to rebuild the lives of those in the area.
- 2 To write letters to local MPs asking what action they are taking on this issue.
- 3 . To instruct the Executive to write an open letter to the NEC informing Them of this policy and, thus, the Union's position.

834	<u>RESOLUTION TO CONDEMN THE DISPROPORTIONATE USE OF FORCE BY ISRAEL IN GAZA</u>
Received:	A resolution from R Reynolds and J Kiffin(YR2 UG PSI) (copy placed in minute book).
Noted:	That the proposers accepted an amendment from D Turner (Ethical Issues Officer) and M Jopp (copy to be placed in minute book) with the proviso that Union Believes 1 and 4 and a reworded Union Resolves 2 and 3 were kept.
Noted:	R Reynolds, proposing the resolution, noted that it was not about taking sides in the overall Middle Eastern conflict; it was about the disproportionate action of Israel. In a difficult situation, Israel had a right to respond but to use first world weaponry against a third world country and massacre its people was unacceptable. He argued that the NUS was the student national voice and it had been asked to take a strong line but it had felt unable to do so. It was important to ensure that the NUS represents students on international issues.
Received:	An amendment from A Taylor (Co-opted Member) .
Noted:	A Taylor, moving the amendment, stated that talking to reliable sources within Gaza, it was apparent that Israel broke the ceasefire and initiated the current conflict, a fact that had gone unreported in the UK media which often had a pro-Israeli bias.
Noted:	That R Reynolds accepted the amendment.
Noted:	B Schulz (International Soc) proposed an amendment scrapping all amendments that had been added during the meeting and returning to the first amendment from D Turner, although within that she was unhappy with the, in her opinion, gratuitous wording of "children" and "fuel extremism in the UK." She argued that

	<p>Council should condemn violence in a general way and that the NUS was right in the position it had taken. She argued that the original resolution was not representative of student opinion.</p>
Noted:	<p>R Reynolds, speaking against the amendment, argued this was not a matter of taking sides but in the here and now on this particular issue it was important and right for students to call on their national organisation to condemn the disproportionate use of force.</p>
Noted:	<p>D Turner, in favour of the amendment argued that Council should acknowledge the humanitarian catastrophe and publicise the work of UNRWA and charity appeals to alleviate the suffering, but it was not the job of a student union to takes sides and become involved in the conflict.</p>
Noted:	<p>J Kiffin, against, argued the debate was about a numbers, the numbers of Palestinians killed. A leading Israeli scholar had said: "this was an eye for an eyelash." He noted that we are here as students to make political stands; that is what student unions do. If one removed the points of the original motion included in the accepted amendment then all one would be saying is that war is horrid and that is (expletive) pointless.</p>
Resolved:	<p>That the amendment be taken in parts.</p>
Resolved:	<p>To reject the amendment and keep Union Believes 6 and 7 and Union resolves 4, to adopt the amendment and delete Union Believes 8 and Union Resolves 3.</p>
Noted:	<p>The Chair asked members to refrain from using expletives during debate.</p>
Received	<p>An amendment from A Taylor.</p>
Noted:	<p>A Taylor, for the amendment, noted that his call for a policy ballot on a boycott of Israeli goods would probably be voted down by Council but as he can walk round campus and easily collect the several hundred signatures required for a policy ballot on the issue the vote would be indicative of how representative Council was on this issue. He argued that there were so many issues that one could discuss such as Palestinian water rights and how Hamas is a democratically elected government that had provided education and health care but this particular issue would provide students with a clear opportunity to express their opinion.</p>
Noted:	<p>In a clarification through the Chair, A Taylor stated that the Israeli products would be predominantly fruit and vegetables.</p>

Noted:	R Reynolds, against the amendment, thought the cost of the policy ballot should be taken into account. He stated that he was against a boycott on principle as it was collective punishment of a people rather than condemnation of the actions of a state.
Resolved:	To reject the amendment.
Received:	A procedural motion from D Sheppard (Academic Officer) that the question now be put.
Noted:	D Sheppard, for the motion, noted that Council had had a positive debate and now had a resolution that would address the humanitarian catastrophe without alienating large sections of the membership. The Union should now move on to action in support of the peoples of Israel and Palestine. P Wells (Societies Officer) against, noted that there had not been one speech against the original resolution; the whole tone of the debate had been that the premises behind the original motion were correct. On such a serious issue, Council needed to hear one speech against.
Resolved:	That the question now be put.
Noted:	The summation was waived.
Resolved:	To adopt the resolution by a large majority.