

Keele UCU Branch motion on solidarity with Palestine and academic freedom

Keele UCU maintains a position of solidarity with Palestine.

The Branch also:

1. Mourns the victims who have lost their lives in this conflict since 7 October 2023.
2. Calls for the return of **all** captured and detained including approximately 200 hostages held by Hamas and approximately 10,000 Palestinians currently imprisoned in Israel
3. Maintains an uncompromising position against all forms of racism, including Islamophobia and Antisemitism.
4. Defends and supports academic and non-academic staff and students at Keele in their right to dissent and protest.
5. Affirms the right of academics, students, commentators, workers and activists to be able to voice solidarity with Palestinians and the Jewish community and contextualize the unfolding violence.
6. Reaffirms the UCU opposition to the Prevent Duty.

Keele UCU Branch notes

The ongoing settler colonial occupation of Palestine and escalation of genocidal violence by the apartheid Israeli state, now culminating in the indiscriminate attack and siege on Gaza, including:

1. The collective punishment of more than two million people by cutting off water, electricity, food supplies, and humanitarian aid in clear violation of international law.
2. The mass killings of civilians, surpassing 10,000 to date according to the Gaza Health Ministry
3. The strike on academic institutions, including bombing of University of Gaza, Al-Azhar University, the North Gaza and Tubas branches of Al-Quds Open University, and 19 other HE institutions, alongside hospitals and other civilian infrastructure.
4. The colonial, racist and genocidal narratives articulated by Israeli state officials to systematically dehumanize Palestinians, including categorizing Palestinians as barbarians, animals and terrorists, and the uncritical adoption of such narratives, discourses and categories in UK and USA discourse.
5. The targeted and racialized demand and burden placed on Palestinians and their supporters, particularly people of colour, to perform a condemnation of violence as a yardstick for their humanity and, at times, in order to preclude their designation as terrorists.

6. The complicity of the UK government and the main opposition party through their unequivocal moral and material support for Israel, its occupation of Palestine, its genocide and its failure to support an immediate ceasefire and the urgent provision of humanitarian aid.
7. The attacks in our sector to academic freedom and the right to protest in our sector and our workplace with particularly worrying attacks on Palestinian academics, workers students and their supporters, by the British state, university managements and the media.

Keele UCU Branch resolves:

1. To demand an immediate ceasefire in Palestine, including the lifting of the Israeli siege of Gaza and the urgent provision of humanitarian aid on a colossal scale
2. To call for the suspension of UK political and military support to Israel, which is used to perpetrate war crimes and crimes against humanity.
3. To articulate its solidarity with Palestine through whatever channels open to its members and in the terms called for by Palestinian trade unions and academics. To reaffirm our affiliation with and continue to support campaigns in solidarity with Palestine in the UK.
4. To support all colleagues in this activity by: Working with Keele to affirm and uphold our institution's legal and normative commitments to academic freedom, and protections of Keele staff and students in the exercise of that freedom and to defend the right for peaceful protest.
5. To call upon Keele university to release a public statement condemning the ongoing genocide and violence, as well as providing support to our staff and students in this traumatic time (as done with the Russian invasion of Ukraine)
6. To ask for adaptations for Palestinian and Israeli students and staff and others affected by the current situation:
 - Adjustments so that they can use more of the 7-day self-certifying options on assignments
 - Visa support for Palestinian, Israeli and other affected students and staff
 - Easier signposting and support for hardship funds if needed

Approved by a quorate Branch EGM on 13 November 2023.

In framing this motion, we have drawn upon similar motions proposed by other UCU branches, notably that by SOAS.