

Motion to twin ICSU with Islamic University of Gaza

Presented by: Nida Harwood (President of Islamic Society)

Seconded by: Caroline Clark (President of Stop the War Society)

This Union Notes:

1. That the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees equal rights for all, including the promise that 'Everyone has the right to education' (Article 26). That the status of the Palestinian territories (including West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem) is described in International Law as "Occupied territories", and that the Fourth Geneva Convention, 1949 states that "The occupying power shall, with the cooperation of the national and local authorities, facilitate the proper working of all institutions devoted to the care and education of children." (Article 50)
2. That over one third of the Palestinian population are students in full-time school or University education. That the 700 IDF roadblocks and other military obstacles frequently prevent students from being able to attend university.
3. That several humanitarian and charitable organizations have stated that "in terms of poverty, food aid dependency, humanitarian access, unemployment, access to basic services and medical supplies, we are witnessing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Gaza." [1] That these conditions make the right of education for all unattainable.
4. That on 27th December 2008 Israel launched a large scale military attack against Gaza lasting 22 days with 1284 Palestinians killed, at least 280 of whom are under 18 years old. [2]
5. That throughout the recent conflict several academic and educational buildings have been attacked, including the Ministry of Education, University Teachers Association, and American International School. [3] That during this operation 66 schools have been damaged or destroyed by the Israeli army- 7 directly targeted, and 37 of which were UNRWA schools being used to shelter those whose homes had been destroyed. [2]
6. That the Islamic University of Gaza was directly attacked on the 28th and 29th of December, its science and engineering labs destroyed along with its academic records, and the library damaged. That end of year exams had to be cancelled, and are unlikely to be re-sat this academic year. [4]
7. That the siege has caused shortages in educational material and stationary. That press houses in Gaza lack the raw materials to print textbooks and are unable to import them from Egypt, and that UNRWA schools in Gaza lack at least 350,000 textbooks. That restrictions placed on movement of students has denied access of Gazan students to education in the West Bank and vice versa. That at least 2,500 Gazan students, who study at universities abroad, have been unable to leave Gaza, due to Israeli restrictions on travel, and take up their places. [5]
9. That Birzeit University on the West Bank is twinned with Manchester, London Metropolitan and Liverpool universities, as well as Oxford and Warwick student unions. That several other UK universities have successfully twinned with An-Najah, Hebron and Al-Quds universities in Gaza and the West Bank. [6]
10. That LSE in particular has an officially endorsed collection day for Palestine, scholarships for Palestinian students, donates computers and books to Gaza and has issued a statement from the director on Israel's assault. [7]

This Union believes:

1. That the crippling blockade Israel has subjected Gaza to, denying them access to basic food, medical and fuel supplies is a form of collective punishment, that violates human rights and is against international law (Article 33, Fourth Geneva Convention, signed by Israel August 1949). That the union condemns these actions for which there is no fair justification

2. That Academic Freedom, which encompasses the freedom to enquire and to teach as well as the freedom of students to learn, is not a privilege but are basic and inalienable rights, which all people should have access to. That Israel denies this right to Palestinians.
3. That the denial of right to education, and the intentional persecution of Palestinian students is something that our Union should continue to stand against.
4. That twinning with the Islamic University of Gaza is a statement of solidarity with the Palestinian students in their right to an education, and will help to improve the condition of education of students from Gaza.

This Union resolves:

1. To send a letter of support and a copy of this motion to the Islamic University of Gaza Student Union inviting them to twin with Imperial College Student Union.
2. To mandate the Sabbatical team to demand that IC Rector Sir Roy Anderson issue a statement condemning Israel's attack on educational institutions.
3. To mandate the President to release a press statement condemning the targeting of academic institutions and schools by the Israeli Army.
4. To lobby the University to provide at least three scholarships for Palestinian students who wish to study at Imperial College, and to drop application fees for all scholarships to Palestinians.
5. To lobby the University to drop International Fees for all Palestinian students and charge them only home fees.
6. To lobby the University to initiate active academic relations with IUG through departmental links, student and faculty exchange, joint research projects, and inclusion at international academic conferences, as other universities have done (Oxford, Manchester).
7. To support the students of Birzeit "right to education campaign" and to campaign for Human Rights for all Palestinians, both within the territory of mandate Palestine and for Palestinian refugees.
8. To lobby University to donate surplus books, materials and equipment to the Islamic University of Gaza.
9. To publicise our policy of twinning with Islamic University of Gaza Student Union by erecting a plaque to be placed in the Student Union, with the following words:

Palestine and the Right to Education

Imperial College Students' Union is twinned with the Islamic University of Gaza in Gaza City. Students in Palestine have had their right to education consistently denied by the Israeli Occupation: checkpoints, attacks on Universities and limitations on movement seriously hinder the ability of students in Palestine to learn. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares that everyone has the 'right to education': we fully support the struggle of our fellow students in Palestine to realise this fundamental Human Right.
10. To lobby the University to disaffiliate with Israeli academic institutions until Israel abides by international law.

- [1] <http://www.medicinsdumonde.org.uk/doclib/150744-thegazastripahumanitarianimplosion-report.pdf>, The Gaza Strip: A humanitarian implosion, Amnesty International UK, CARE International UK, Christian Aid, CAFOD Medecins du Monde UK, Oxfam, Save the Children UK and Trocaire
- [2] <http://uk.reuters.com/article/middleeastCrisis/idUKLN756983>, Israeli-Hamas conflict tolls
- [3] <http://right2edu.birzeit.edu/news/article495>
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jan/10/gaza-schools>, Attacks on schools in Gaza
http://www.pacbi.org/boycott_news_more.php?id=882_0_1_0_C, Israel Bombs University Teachers Association in Gaza
- [4] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jan/10/gaza-schools>
<http://right2edu.birzeit.edu/news/article495>
- [5] <http://www.pchrgaza.org/files/clouse/english/Humanitaria.pdf>, The Policy of Collective Punishment Aggravates the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip
- [6] <http://www.twinningwithpalestine.net/groupsuniversities.html>
- [7] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/jan/22/studentpolitics-londonschoolofeconomics>, Protests over Gaza spread to 8 English universities