

National Tertiary Education Union — University of Sydney branch

See [below](#) for the text of the motion.

See also a [fact sheet](#) on the motion.



Member endorsements of the Palestine solidarity motion for debate on May 9

Endorsements from:

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Ihab Shalbak, School of Social and Political Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

As Israel's war on the Palestinian people enters its seventh month it becomes increasingly clear that passive neutrality is not an option in the face of a genocidal campaign supported and abetted by most of Western leadership and

opposed by much of the Global South and a large section of people in the Global North. For an academic community that prizes freedom, equality, justice and Indigenous rights in this country and ranges itself against warmongering, racism and oppression, a passive neutrality on Palestine, at this very moment, is equal to active complicity with the crimes committed by the state of Israel. The issue at stake is not simply one of being prepared to name and shame in order to live up to a normative self-understanding. Rather, as universities are becoming part of global supply chains that are increasingly contributing to the export and development of military hardware, the academic community is at a serious risk of being actively complicit in Israel's genocidal war. It is time to call on the University of Sydney to shoulder its responsibility to shield its community, including students, professional staff and academics, from such complicity by severing any relations with weapons manufacturers and militaries, particularly those that arm or support Israel. Supporting this boycott and solidarity motion is a belated shouldering of our obligations and responsibilities before it is too late for all of us.

In addition, as workers in the higher education system we cannot ignore the devastating impact of Israel's war on Palestinian schools, universities and scholars. As a recent United Nations report on the first six months of Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza shows, more than 5,479 students, 261 teachers, and 95 university professors have been killed. All Gaza's universities have been wilfully destroyed or severely damaged. In the West Bank, universities are frequently raided, students often arrested and shot at. Palestinian academics in Israeli universities are intimidated and coerced by police in collusion with the management of Israeli universities. The incitement by the president of the Hebrew University against Palestinian scholar Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian and her subsequent arrest by the police is just one example of this intimidation and coercion. Under the circumstances, supporting this motion against the murder of academics, the destruction of their institutions and their intimidation is an urgent act of solidarity.

Ghena Krayem, University of Sydney Law School

At a time when the death and injury of tens of thousands seem to matter so little, you might think what words can make a difference. As academics, words are everything, they are our world, our work and a representation of who we are and what we stand for. How can we not support this motion? How can we not use our privilege and position to stand up for those who are suffering unimaginable

devastation? Our colleagues at Palestinian Universities who have all been decimated in Gaza, along with substantial parts of the education, health and welfare system have asked us to stand with them. We all have a responsibility to stop the violence and atrocities happening. It isn't complicated or complex, it is about taking action now before we lose our collective humanity.

Sujatha Fernandes, Professor of Sociology, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

In the last seven months I have witnessed the most terrible events of my lifetime - genocide, ecocide and scholasticide in Palestine. Our students have such moral clarity and courage in standing up right now, asking the university to divest from genocide. I have taken my son down to visit their Gaza solidarity encampment on the lawns and it was beautiful to be a part of. We must follow their lead and pass this motion.

Kurt Iveson, Professor of Urban Geography, School of Geosciences, Faculty of Science, and University of Sydney NTEU Branch President 2016-2021

In response to the awful attack of October 7, the state of Israel has reacted with a disproportionate violence that has killed tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians, and deliberately decimated the infrastructures that sustain everyday life in Gaza (including universities). We should stand with the millions around the world demanding an end to this collective punishment – I support the motion's calls for university staff and union members to cease work that lends legitimacy or support to Israel's current violence, and for our university to cut institutional ties with universities in Israel and the arms industry.

Tatjana Seizova-Cajic, Behavioural and Social Sciences in Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health

I wholeheartedly support the motion. Israel, along with the powers that support it, is in a very dark place. The evil they are committing on a massive scale cannot be justified by anything. This inhumanity must stop now, and for a durable, positive change, external pressure is crucial. This is no time to be passive - please vote for the motion.

Jeremy Heathcote, Indigenous Health Community Engagement Officer, Faculty of Medicine and Health (First Nations representative, University of Sydney NTEU Branch Committee and NTEU NSW Division Indigenous councilor)

Earlier this year the National gathering of NTEU Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegates from across the country met and endorsed a motion on this important issue. As the First Nations representative of University of Sydney branch and a long time supporter of the freedom from oppression of the Palestinian community, I endorse the motion that has been put forward by our branch. The call for peace transcends ideologies and I encourage all of our members to vote in support.

Lobna Yassine, Sydney School of Education and Social Work, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

As a social work academic, I am committed to principles of justice and liberation, and have a responsibility to speak up, just as this university holds the responsibility to align itself with peace rather than with weapons manufacturing. As you read and contemplate, Israel is murdering more people, destroying more schools and universities, killing journalists, aid workers and children. The violence and occupation of Israel must end now. On May 9th, I will support the motion calling the university management to cut all ties with Israeli organisations contributing to the genocide in Gaza.

Nikki Wedgwood, School of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Health

By voting for our branch's Palestine solidarity motion, I am answering the call from Palestinian union members for their international counterparts to "end all forms of complicity with Israel's crimes." For our branch members, this includes complicity in the crime of genocide, via our university's involvement with arms manufacturers like Elbit and Thales. It also includes complicity in the crimes of apartheid, and the illegal occupation of Palestine via our university's institutional relationship with Israeli universities, themselves all complicit in Israel's military occupation of Palestinian territories. Boycotts are a peaceful way to exert power against violent oppressors – as in the case of South Africa. By voting for our branch's Palestine solidarity motion, I am refusing to be complicit in crimes against humanity and I am refusing to stand by and do nothing.

Daej Arab, Education Designer, Faculty of Medicine and Health

I joined the NTEU in October 2023 after witnessing members of the union speak out against injustices happening to innocent people in Gaza. Being an NTEU member has empowered me to speak out and take a stance against the genocide happening right now to Palestinians. On May 9th, I will support the motion calling the university management to cut all ties with Israeli organisations contributing to the genocide in Gaza.

Kiki, casual academic, Criminology, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

As a criminologist and educator, I am deeply committed to anti-violence work. This extends to the prevention of oppression in all forms, including settler colonialism, genocide and state violence. I am proud to endorse the NTEU motion to divest from institutions complicit in the genocide by Israel, and the weapons manufacturing industry more broadly

Marcus Strom, Media Adviser, Media and PR

The University must act to ensure its reputation as an institution pursuing 'Leadership for Good' and its legal position are protected. To that end, the University should ensure it reviews all relationships with countries, institutions and companies that threaten those positions. Specifically, maintaining links with Israeli universities while the Zionist state is under investigation for genocide by the International Court of Justice and pursues ethnic cleansing against the Palestinian people is not only immoral but puts the University's reputation and legal situation at risk.

Melanie Morrison, Sydney Peace Foundation

Decades of impunity of Israel's human rights atrocities has led to the unprecedented scale of death and destruction we are witnessing in Gaza and the West Bank today. As a committed advocate for non-violent solutions to conflict, I endorse the NTEU Palestine motion as a just and moral way to put pressure on the University of Sydney to comply with international law and broader humanitarian principles, and to ultimately end Israel's impunity.

An Nguyen, Faculty of Medicine and Health

I would like to endorse the proposed BDS motion, calling for The University of Sydney to end all partnerships with Israeli universities and arms companies which are currently aiding the Israeli government's genocidal campaign to annihilate the Gaza Strip and ethnically cleanse the land of Palestinians. This comes in line with the Australian Council of Trade Unions call to the Australian Government to end all military trade with Israel. The University cannot continue to remain silent, they cannot continue their dealings with Israeli "business as usual". We must end our complicity and do all we must for a Free Palestine

**Michael Thomson, University of Sydney NTEU Branch President
2003–2016, NSW Division Secretary 2016–2021**

Peace is union business. Saying stop bombing hospitals, schools and universities is union business. I support this motion and hope it gets up at your meeting.

University of Sydney Students' Representative Council

We, the Students Representative Council, are the peak representative body for undergraduate students at the University of Sydney. We have been active in organising the ongoing Gaza Solidarity Encampment outside the front laws of the Quadrangle on the Camperdown campus.

We ask that the NTEU commits to endorsing an institutional academic boycott of Israeli universities, and pressures the university to end its partnerships with all weapons companies, including Thales Australia. We also call on you to support our demands at the Gaza Solidarity Encampment.

General Union of Palestinian Workers, Australia

As the principal international organisation representing Palestinian workers exiled from historic Palestine, The General Union of Palestinian Workers commends the University of Sydney Branch of the NTEU for the solidarity motion being debated on May 9. Palestinian unions have called on university workers around the world to cut ties with apartheid Israel. Passing this motion would represent a material step forward for the cause of Palestinian rights amidst this historic genocide. In the name of justice, antiracism, workers' rights, peace and the equality of peoples, we call on all union members in all Australian unions to support the initiatives in this motion. (Bashir Salawha, General Union of Palestinian Workers, Australian representative)



Palestine resolution for NTEU members' meeting, May 9

The branch notes:

1. The International Court of Justice preliminary ruling that the state of Israel is plausibly committing genocide in the Gaza Strip, and Israel's failure to comply with the court's preliminary orders to prevent this;
2. The ties that The University of Sydney maintains with weapons manufacturers and militaries that arm or support Israel, and that are therefore implicated in the killing of Palestinians;
3. The incompatibility of these ties with the university's commitment to 'leading to improve the world around us' and 'education for all, leadership for good'. The university should not contribute to the development of weapons or to the profits of arms companies, regardless of the conflicts in which these weapons are used or any civil applications weapons technology may also have;
4. That staff and students must not be exposed to the charge that either they or their own institution is aiding and abetting war crimes, crimes against humanity and/or plausible acts of genocide.

We further note:

5. The death-toll in Gaza of 33,000+ people (with more than 13,000 children killed), and the targeting of hospitals, doctors, humanitarian workers and journalists;
6. The fact that all Gaza's universities have been destroyed and numerous Gazan academics have been killed in targeted assassinations;

7. The fact that multiple international authorities recognise that Israel commits the crime of apartheid;
8. The fact that Israeli universities all directly serve the project of Israeli settler colonialism and apartheid, in particular through their roles in weapons research, military training, and in the oppression of Palestinian students on their own campuses.

In particular, we also note:

9. The call from Palestinian trade unions to oppose the arming of Israel;
10. The call from universities throughout Palestine, and from our colleagues in the Palestinian universities' union, for international university workers to implement an institutional academic boycott of Israel. This does not prevent collaboration with individual academics, but only affects collaboration with, or officially mediated by, Israeli universities as institutions;
11. The NTEU National Council resolution of October 2022, committing the union to active solidarity with Palestine.

Therefore, the branch:

12. Calls on University of Sydney management to cut ties with all organisations that enable the current Gaza violence. This includes all Israeli universities.
13. Calls on University of Sydney management to cut its ties with the weapons industry and militaries in general.
14. Calls on University of Sydney management to establish dedicated international scholarships for Palestinian students, and to welcome Palestinian academics through the Scholars at Risk program.

15. Calls on University of Sydney management to replace the funding of all staff whose position at the university depends on arms companies, to enable them to undertake research for the public good.

Finally, the branch:

16. Expects and encourages members to implement the institutional boycott of Israeli universities (not of individual colleagues).
17. Calls on the wider university community to do the same.
18. Calls on other NTEU branches and the NTEU nationally to pass similar motions to this one.



Fact sheet – Palestine solidarity motion

Why are NTEU members being asked to debate a motion on Palestine?

- The genocide currently being committed in Gaza is among the most serious crimes of recent times. Israel has destroyed every single university in Gaza, killed or wounded 100 000 Gazans, including hundreds if not thousands of university staff and students, threatened the rest with famine, and made Gaza unliveable for years to come.
- Fellow unionists and colleagues in the **Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions**, the **Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees**, and at **Palestinian universities** have appealed to us, their international colleagues in higher education, for solidarity.
- We don't often have the opportunity to directly contribute to issues of global justice. At the moment, we do. The greater the pressure on Israel, the fewer Palestinian lives will be taken.

What positions has the NTEU taken on Palestine so far?

- In 2022, the National Council of the NTEU voted to 'call upon members to participate in active solidarity with Palestinians', and 'support the right of NTEU members to engage in boycott, divestment,

and sanctions (BDS) actions that seek to end the occupation of Palestine’.

- The National Executive’s statement of October last year recognised that ‘peace can only be achieved when the Palestinian people are able to exercise their right to self-determination in a free and independent Palestine’. This is exactly the aim to which today’s motion is intended to contribute.
- Earlier this year, the **National Indigenous Forum** committed to lobbying the union nationally to adopt the institutional academic boycott of Israel and to cut ties with weapons manufacturers. Our motion implements the two measures called for by Indigenous NTEU members.

What does the motion do?

- The motion calls on university management to take four specific actions :
 - (1) cut ties with all organisations that enable the current Gaza violence, including all Israeli universities;
 - (2) cut ties with the weapons industry and militaries in general;
 - (3) establish dedicated international scholarships for Palestinian students, and welcome Palestinian academics through the Scholars at Risk program;
 - (4) replace the funding of all staff whose position at the university depends on arms companies, to enable them to undertake research for the public good.

How are Israeli universities responsible for the oppression of Palestinians?

- Israeli universities’ central role in oppression of Palestine has been exhaustively documented for decades and is not in doubt: institutionally, *all* Israeli universities are an essential component of the Israeli war machine and directly responsible for the onslaught on Palestine.
- As the Israeli scholar Maya Wind, author of *Towers of Ivory and Steel. How Israeli Universities deny Palestinian Freedom* (Verso, 2024), explains, Israeli universities are ‘enlisting their institutes, resources, and courses to produce hasbara, state propaganda, to defend Israel from international criticism. They are crafting legal scholarship to shield Israel from accountability for its war crimes. They are training soldiers and developing weapons for the Israeli military. They are granting special

benefits, scholarships and even course credit to reserve soldiers returning from the Gaza Strip. Every day, Israeli universities make this genocide possible.'

What does boycotting Israeli universities actually mean for NTEU members?

Crucially, we are not being asked to end collaborations on an individual level with academics who work at universities in Israel. Our Palestinian colleagues are just asking us to:

- Oppose institution-level collaboration between Sydney University and Israeli universities, e.g. exchanges, fellowships, joint funding schemes, and other bilateral agreements and collaborations. Four Norwegian universities, the University of Turin, and Pitzer College in the US, among others, have recently done this.
- Not collaborate academically with the leaders (Deans and Presidents) of Israeli universities, who have made themselves accountable for their institutions' support for the permanent war on Palestine
- Not to attend conferences or other events officially sponsored by Israeli universities.

What links does the University of Sydney have with the arms industry?

- Palestinian unions and university colleagues are also asking us to end our links with the military hardware and technology industries.
- Our university has many such links, including with **Thales, Lockheed Martin, L3 Harris, and Safran**, some of which are directly or indirectly implicated in the current war on Gaza. Universities should stand for, and contribute to, peace. We should not be fuelling militarism or the profits of companies whose business model depends on an escalation of war in the world.
- RMIT in Melbourne recently ended its collaboration with Israeli arms manufacturer Elbit. We should do the same.

Israel and the crime of apartheid

- Israel's practice of apartheid has been established by the Palestinian human rights NGO Al-Haq, the Israeli human rights NGO B'Tselem, and by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Message from the General Union of Palestinian Workers

- Bashir Salawha, the Australian representative of the General Union of Palestinian Workers, calls on all union members to support the motion:

“As the principal international organisation representing Palestinian workers exiled from historic Palestine, The General Union of Palestinian Workers commends the University of Sydney Branch of the NTEU for the solidarity motion being debated on May 9.

Palestinian unions have called on university workers around the world to cut ties with apartheid Israel. Passing this motion would represent a material step forward for the cause of Palestinian rights amidst this historic genocide.

In the name of justice, antiracism, workers’ rights, peace and the equality of peoples, we call on all union members in all Australian unions to support the initiatives in this motion.”

