



NTEU UniMelb Boycott/Divestment Motions FAQs

[View the draft motions here.](#)

Why are NTEU members at the University of Melbourne being asked to debate a motion on Palestine?

- Australian Unions are part of an international labour movement that recognizes the interdependence of workers' rights across the world, and have been at the forefront of human rights campaigns, anti-apartheid boycotts and sanctions, and anti-war movements.
- 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.
- Academics at Israeli Universities are restricted in their academic freedom, students are stripped of degrees for undertaking research that conflicts with the Zionist project, and universities themselves are interdependent with the Israeli "Defence" Forces (IDF).
- Israel is currently undertaking what has now been recognized as a genocidal war, stands accused of multiple war crimes and has destroyed every single university in Gaza. As of August 4, 5pm in Gaza (15:00 GMT) the IDF has killed or wounded 40,000 Palestinians, inflicting a famine and medical emergency on others and made Gaza unlivable for years to come. A recent article in the Lancet stated that: "it is not implausible to estimate that up to 186 000 or even more deaths could be attributable to the current conflict in Gaza" (Khatib, McKee and Yusuf 2024).
- Israeli Universities are deeply complicit in military research, propaganda, and training, and entire disciplines are being drawn into supporting the Zionist project of Judaization. This includes the design of archaeological projects to construct arguments for Israeli land claims, to novel interpretations of humanitarian law and the law of war that serve Israel's purposes, the promotion of Middle Eastern Studies that perpetuates Orientalism, others Arabs and provides data and training to the Intelligence Corps and the IDF.
- The University of Melbourne has suppressed the speech of staff at the institution by openly adopting the IHRA definition of anti-semitism, a definition that has been widely criticised as suppressing criticism of Israel; has persecuted students who



have exercised their rights to peaceful process; and is currently 'requesting' that staff remove posters in support of Palestine.

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 2023 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.
- In 2024 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.
- In May 2024 the Sydney University NTEU branch passed a BDS motion similar to that proposed at the University of Melbourne
- **At the University of Melbourne NTEU branch**, we have already passed several motions in 2024 calling on our University to 1) disclose ties to weapons manufacturers, militaries and institutions, 2) repeal the IHRA definition of antisemitism, 3) protect the right of academic and professional staff to academic and intellectual freedom, and 4) join the Scholars At Risk Australia National Section. NTEU UniMelb members also stood in solidarity with the UniMelb for Palestine (UM4P) solidarity encampment. **Read more about our Palestine Solidarity campaign [here](#).**

What does the motion mean for NTEU members?

- The motion calls for an end to Institution-level collaboration between the University of Melbourne and Israeli universities, e.g. exchanges, fellowships, joint funding schemes, and other bilateral agreements and collaborations.
- Individual level collaborations with academics who work at universities in Israel are not impacted.
- Institutional level collaborations encompass:



- collaborations with the leaders (Deans and Presidents) of Israeli universities, who have made themselves accountable for their institutions' support for the permanent war on Palestine
- attending conferences or other events officially sponsored by Israeli universities
- accepting Institutional support from Israeli Universities, eg grant money or funded visits
- joint programs with Israeli Universities such as student exchanges, and joint PhD programs
- An end to collaborations between the University of Melbourne with companies and government departments that are contributing to the military assault on Gaza and the weaponry and military hardware and software that is deployed by the IDF.

How are Israeli universities responsible for the oppression of Palestinians?

- Israeli universities' central role in the oppression of Palestinians 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.
- Israel has continued to settle the occupied territories including building universities in the West Bank that act as surveillance and propaganda entities.
- Students at Israeli universities can obtain credits through participating in propaganda activity (hasbara): posting on social media etc
- In short, 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" (Maya Wind, *Towers of Ivory and Steel. How Israeli Universities deny Palestinian Freedom*, Verso, 2024).



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

- Palestinian unions and university colleagues are also asking Universities to end our links with the military hardware and technology industries.
- The University of Melbourne boasts of its expertise in 'defence' technology:
"The University of Melbourne is engaged in developing advanced defence technologies, including crossing and redefining the frontiers of human-machine interfaces, sensor technologies, advanced materials, medical countermeasures, enhanced human performance and autonomous systems"
(<https://eng.unimelb.edu.au/industry/defence>)
- The University has disclosed its direct links with Boeing and Lockheed Martin, and is likely to have substantially more involvement through the Carlton-based Defence Science Institute.
- A search of AusTender, the Australian Government register of tender contracts, shows that the University of Melbourne has received over \$44 million in Defence Department contracts for Military Science and Research between 1st January 2020 and June 2024.