

(Name and address of South Yorkshire) Council

Dear Council leader (Name) (list at bottom of page 2)

Our (name of branch) Trade Union Branch is writing to you to express our concern about some of the current investments of South Yorkshire Pension Authority.

South Yorkshire Pension Authority has investments of at least £199 million in companies connected with Israel's occupation of Palestine in both Gaza and the West Bank, including a number of investments in companies that sell weapons to Israel. These include Airbus, BAE systems, Honeywell, Lockheed Martin, QinetiQ and Rolls Royce, all of which supply weapons or components for weapons that are being used in Gaza to kill and injure many tens of thousands of defenceless Palestinians. Some of these companies also sell equipment that is used for surveillance and control of the Palestinian population such as at checkpoints, and other companies sell militarised equipment used for home, school and other infrastructure demolitions.

South Yorkshire Pension Authority also has investments in banks such as Barclays and HSBC which invest heavily in arms and other complicit companies. It also has investments in businesses on the United Nations list of companies doing business in the illegal settlements, and in Israeli companies and bonds that help to finance occupation and genocide.

Israel has held Gaza under blockade since 2007. Since October 2023 Israel has killed 47,000 Palestinians, mostly civilians and has cut off water, power, food and medical aid to Palestinians. Israel is now being investigated by the International Court of Justice for the possible crime of genocide. Amnesty International has produced a report called 'You Feel Like You Are Subhuman: Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza' December 2024, which clearly states that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza.

The International Court of Justice ruling of 19 July 2024 declared that Israel's occupation of the Gaza strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is unlawful, along with the associated settlement regime, annexation and use of natural resources. The Court said that Israel is violating the international prohibition on apartheid.

"States must immediately review all diplomatic, political, and economic ties with Israel, inclusive of business and finance, **pension funds**, academia and charities."

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/07/experts-hail-icj-declaration-illegality-israels-presence-occupied>

The ICJ called for an arms embargo, **an end to all other commercial activities that may damage the Palestinians**, and targeted sanctions against entities involved in illegal occupation, racial segregation and apartheid policies. It has added that investors who fail to prevent or mitigate their business relationships with complicit companies may be directly contributing to Israel's human rights abuses and could face "repercussions for complicity in potential atrocity crimes".

South Yorkshire Pension Authority has investments that allow profit to be made from the violation of human rights, and is taking reputational, financial and legal risks with pensioners money.

Furthermore, the SYPA's investments in these companies directly contravenes its own Responsible Investment Policy. In this policy, SYPA states that the broad principle underpinning its investments is to "do no harm".

The SYPA Responsible Investment policy states that well-governed assets will present a "respect for the human rights of the communities with which they interact". Furthermore, the Responsible Investment Policy expects all companies to abide by UN Global Compact Principles and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, both of which explicitly state that **companies must ensure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses**.

Members of our branch are urging (name of council) Council to issue a public statement making it clear that it is opposed to any investments made by South Yorkshire Pension Authority that are involved in the violation of human rights, and specifically any companies that enable apartheid, occupation and genocide to be carried out by Israel against the Palestinian people.

We hope that this will be discussed at the next Council meeting and we await your response with interest.

Yours sincerely

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