Open Letter to the University of Guelph Central Student Association (CSA)

We, the undersigned organizations, call for the CSA to refuse the accreditation of Guelph Students Supporting Israel (GSSI). This call is based on the CSA's own mandate, as described in its Policy and Bylaw Manual, whereby the CSA "work[s] to build a community on-and off-campus free from all forms of oppression. [They] run services and events that support students including students from marginalized groups."[1]

Obviously, Guelph students can take any personal position they wish in regards to the state of Israel. But an organization: 1) dedicated to the support of a foreign government – Israel – which is accused of apartheid by major human rights organizations, and 2) dedicated to showing "the good" that a colonial movement – Zionism – "has caused" is an organization that *supports oppression*. If it permits the accreditation of GSSI, the CSA will have failed to uphold its anti-oppression mandate.

All of the major human rights organizations of the world, including Amnesty International[2], Human Rights Watch[3], and Israel-based B'Tselem[4] have recently issued reports detailing how Israel is practicing apartheid against Palestinians. If this weren't enough, late last year, the new government that formed in Israel has been described as the "most right-wing in Israel's history."[5] Itamar Ben-Gvir, the leader of the Otzma Yehudit party, who recently became the Minister of National Security and has control over the police in Israel and the West Bank is known for his anti-Arab remarks and has urged for a loosening of the laws governing when security forces may open fire on Palestinian civilians.[6]

While some may claim today that Zionism is simply about the "self-determination of the Jewish people," this is historical revisionism. In the early 20th century, the founders of the Zionist movement openly described Zionism as colonialism.[7] [8] Max Nordau, for example, wrote, "Zionism rejects on principle all colonization on a small scale, and the idea of 'sneaking' into Palestine. The Zionists have therefore devoted themselves preeminently to a zealous and tireless advocacy of the uniting of the already existing Jewish colonies in Palestine."[9] Israeli settler colonialism continues today with the aim of bringing all Palestinian land under Israeli sovereignty and expelling all indigenous Palestinians.[10]

Members of the Guelph Palestinian Student Association (GPSA) can personally attest to the harms and oppression that members and their families have endured and continue to endure today as a result of Israel's apartheid practices and settler-colonial origins.

As a student union representing students on campus, the CSA should make the effort to understand the brutal realities faced by Palestinians under Israeli apartheid and military occupation. It should also listen to the voices of University of Guelph students who have been directly affected by Israel's violent founding ideologies. Ultimately, if the CSA allows GSSI to operate and advertise itself in the University Center, the university demonstrates that its "commitment to decolonization" is meaningless.

We reiterate: do not allow for the accreditation of the GSSI.

Signed by:

- Guelph Palestinian Student Association (GPSA)
- Al-Zahra Student Association (GuelphZSA)
- Guelph Afghan Student Association (GASA)
- Stand with Uyghurs at UoG

- Middle Eastern Student Association at UofG (MESA)
- Guelph Students for Environmental Change (GSEC)
- The African Student Association (TASA)
- Guelph Iranian Student Association (GISA)
- University of Guelph's Muslims Student Association (MSA)
- Palestinian Student Association uOttawa (PSA uOttawa)
- Palestinian Cultural Club at Western (PCC Western)
- INSAF uOttawa
- Students for Justice in Palestine at Carleton University (SJP Carleton)
- Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights at the University of British Columbia (UBC SPHR)
- Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights at Concordia University (SPHR Concordia)
- Students for Justice in Palestine at the University of Manitoba

Endnotes

1. "University of Guelph Central Students Association, Policy and Bylaw Manual," p. 5
2. "Israel's Apartheid against Palestinians," Amnesty International, February 1, 2022, accessed Feb. 10, 2023 at https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2022/02/israels-system-of-apartheid/
3. "A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and persecution," Human Rights Watch, April 27, 2021, accessed Feb. 10, 2023 at https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution
4. "A regime of Jewish supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This is apartheid," B'Tselem (The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories), January 12, 2021, accessed Feb. 10, 2023 at https://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/202101_this_is_apartheid
5. Berg, Raffi, "Israel's most right-wing government agreed under Benjamin Netanyahu," BBC, Dec. 22, 2022, accessed Feb. 10, 2023 at https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-63942616
6. Ibid.
7. "Zionism is not colonialism, just Jewish self-determination," Decolonize Palestine, accessed Feb. 10, 2023 at https://decolonizepalestine.com/myth/zionism-is-not-colonialism-just-jewish-self-determination/
8. Scholtes, Nora, "'Bulwark against Asia': Zionist Exclusivism and Palestinian Responses," University of Kent, 2005, Dec. 22, 2022, accessed Feb. 10, 2023 at https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-63942616
9. Nordau, Max, Zionism and Anti-Semitism Zionism by Nordau; and Anti-Semitism by Gottheil, Project Gutenberg, Jan. 7, 2008, accessed Feb. 10, 2023 at https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/19049185-zionism-and-anti-semitism-zionism-by-nordau-and-anti-semitism-by-gotthe
10. Ayyash, Mark Muhannad, "Israel is a settler colony, annexing native land is what it does," Aljazeera, July 7, 2020, accessed Feb. 10, 2023 at https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/7/7/israel-is-a-settler-colony-annexing-native-land-is-what-it-does