

Subject: QJCR Referendum: Motion to Express Public Solidarity with Palestine
Date: Monday, 17 June 2024 at 11:38:33 British Summer Time
From: quen-jcr-request@lists.cam.ac.uk on behalf of JCR President
To: quen-jcr@lists.cam.ac.uk
Attachments: Queens' JCR Motion to Express Public Solidarity with Palestine (1).pdf

Dear members of Queens' College,

On Wednesday 5th June, the JCR membership of Queens' College passed a non-binding referendum to express public solidarity with Palestine. 215 votes were cast out of 542 eligible JCR members, with 182 in favour, 29 in opposition and 4 in abstention. This was the first such referendum held by QJCR in accordance with the constitution and reached double the quorum required.

Queens' College JCR membership voted in solidarity with the Palestinian people, and are horrified by the violence and destruction Palestinians have experienced. The membership denounces the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories, ongoing genocidal acts and war crimes as highlighted by numerous human rights organisations and international law. The membership calls for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and the release of all people being held in contravention of international law.

At least 37,164 civilians in Gaza have been killed in addition to 538 in the West Bank, including more than 15,000 children [1], and the EU has noted that starvation is being used as a weapon of war. 346 schools and all universities have been damaged or destroyed, and more than 5,479 students, 261 teachers and 95 university professors have been killed in Gaza. The ICJ on the 26th January 2024 ruled that there is a credible risk to Palestinians under the 1948 Genocide Convention, and that Israel must take all possible measures to prevent acts of genocide prohibited by the convention [2]. On the 24th May, after Israel launched a direct assault on Rafah, the ICJ ruled that they were obligated by the Genocide Convention to immediately halt this military offensive [3].

The membership notes that Queens' College and the University of Cambridge contributes to and profits from this financially through their investments in companies that enable the ongoing violence against Palestinians, as well as Israeli apartheid [4,5,6,7] and occupation, including the world's five largest arms manufacturers and Caterpillar, a company that provides armoured bulldozers for the destruction of Palestinian homes. Our College has over £220,000 of holdings in arms companies alone through its investments in Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs) and investment managers.

Queens' JCR membership calls for the college to immediately initiate the process of divestment from funds with holdings in arms companies, and companies complicit in Israel's war in Gaza and its illegal occupation of Palestinian territories. The JCR membership endorses the establishment of an oversight committee consisting of students, fellows and staff to ensure Queens' investments are always in line with the ethics of College members. The Queens' College JCR membership also stands in solidarity with the Cambridge Encampment for Palestine, and supports its calls for disclosure, divestment, reinvestment and protection.

The JCR membership is encouraged by the establishment of the University's Humanitarian Response Fund and supports efforts to add to this fund from individual donors, colleges and

departments. The JCR welcomes Queens' own provisioning for its Palestinian college members and their families and the continued promise to financially assist any members affected by the conflict, and asks that the college and wider university also fund dedicated placements and studentships for all those affected as a result of this crisis.

The JCR committee has begun to act on the resolutions as far as possible. Section 22(4b) of the Education Act 1994 places restrictions on the political activities of student unions, as it does on the charities of which they are a part. The Queens' JCR committee is disappointed that, as a student union, it is legally restricted from carrying out all the demands of the referendum, such as issuing a public statement endorsing all its resolutions.

The officers of the JCR will raise the issues represented by the referendum with senior college officers during their regular meetings and report on it to the Governing Body. We support the protection of freedom of speech in academia in discussing the actions of the Israeli government in a constructive, respectable and peaceful way. Academic freedom of speech must be protected from targeted repression. We condemn all instances of antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of discrimination that have occurred on campus in relation to this conflict.

The Queens' JCR Committee

[1] <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2023/10/9/israel-hamas-war-in-maps-and-charts-live-tracker>

[2] <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-sum-01-00-en.pdf>

[3] <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1114702>

[4] <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/05/1150196>

[5] <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution>

[6] <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2022/02/israels-system-of-apartheid/>

[7] <https://www.btselem.org/topic/apartheid>

The original motion is attached to this email.