

LSE UCU Branch Committee Statement on Israel-Gaza Conflict and Academic Freedom (16 October 2023)

The LSE UCU branch committee condemns the recent and ongoing violence in Palestine and Israel, and expresses concern and care for our community members and people around the world impacted by the violence and loss of life and freedom. We support and echo [UCU's statement on Israel/Gaza](#), and join our members and people across the world in mourning the loss of life and continued escalation of violence and in condemning both antisemitism and Islamophobia.

Unfortunately, as the logic of escalation and violence spreads, several of our members have been subjected to harassment, hate mail and threats for publicly expressing their solidarity with victims and with political struggles for justice. There is a disturbing inequity in reactions to expressions of support for those affected by this conflict: across the country and world, support for Palestine has been silenced and governments are threatening to criminalize pro-Palestinian statements and political movements. As a committee, we have a duty to defend the academic freedom of our union members and to support critical discussion and democratic engagement around questions of social justice. More broadly, as academics and as people who work within the university, we affirm our right to inhabit this space as free and critical thinkers. We condemn efforts by governments, including the UK and across Europe, who seek to suppress and criminalize political discussion and civil protest, which are fundamental aspects of academic inquiry and free speech.

We believe it is important to unequivocally state: it is unacceptable to equate all Jewish people with the Israeli state, and it is unacceptable to equate all

Palestinians and Arabs with Hamas. Members should be able to express support for Palestinians and Palestine as well as Israelis and Israel, and everyone must be free to criticize governments around the world. In this case in particular, it is important that people are able to criticize the Israeli government without accusations of antisemitism. In fact, there are many Jewish organizations, including in Israel, that are strongly critical of the Israeli government and the occupation of Palestine.

We condemn any attacks and political action seeking to threaten and silence UCU members, members of the UK academy and wider communities for their academic and licit political commitments. We reiterate the importance of academic freedom, particularly in the quest for social justice, as this principle comes under renewed assault. We join people across the world in grieving the loss of life in Israel and Palestine, and ask that our members and wider communities be allowed to mourn, to express solidarity, to raise critical concerns, and to protest in these difficult times.

In solidarity,

LSE UCU Branch Committee, 16 October 2023