

Palestine Solidarity Statement

University of Melbourne NTEU Branch

The University of Melbourne NTEU Branch Committee stands in solidarity with Palestinians and calls for an **immediate end to Israeli occupation, apartheid and ethnic cleansing**, including the inhumane acts of “collective punishment” imposed on the Palestinian people in Gaza.

Mainstream media in Australia and Western countries has largely ignored the accumulated impact of the 16-year Israeli blockade on Gaza's land, air and waters - an area which has been described for over a decade as the world's largest open-air prison. Instead, **much mainstream media has vilified Palestinians and both their right to self-determination and to self-defence.**

What we are seeing in Gaza today is a humanitarian crisis that needs to be addressed urgently. Home to 2.3 million people, Gaza is twenty-seven times smaller than Melbourne. On Friday 13 October, nearly fifty percent of that population (1.1 million) were ordered to evacuate the area by Israel over a 24-hour period, a demand the United Nations said could not be met. Nevertheless, some Gazan residents heeded the warning and evacuated their homes, only to lose their lives in an aerial bombardment by Israel along an evacuation corridor.

It is unethical that we could allow ourselves to witness a genocide in the making and remain silent.

Indeed, Birzeit University has called “upon international academic institutions to **take concrete action to stop the genocidal war on the Palestinian people and to end Israeli settler colonialism.**”

They have called “upon the international academic community, unions, and students to fulfil their intellectual and academic duty of seeking truth, maintaining a critical distance from state-sponsored propaganda, and to hold the perpetrators of genocide and those complicit with them accountable.”

As unionists and as workers at a university, this Branch responds to this call. It is a call by Palestinian academics asking us for unequivocal solidarity, and we meet it in that spirit.

The University of Melbourne sits on Aboriginal land and has a long settler-colonial history. We recognise the role that academia in Australia has played in creating colonial practices, and we take this moment to recognise that settler-colonialism is as unacceptable here on Aboriginal land as it is there on Palestinian land.

These histories are interlinked through the fact of settler-colonialism: for this is what Palestinians are struggling against. It is settler-colonialism that is the problem.

This is not a religious or ethnic war.

As workers at the university, we must also not overlook the complicity of our employer in the Israeli occupation of Palestine. For this reason, **the Branch condemns the University of Melbourne for its partnership with weapons manufacturer Lockheed Martin, supplier of F-16 and F-35 fighter jets and missiles to the Israeli military, and calls for an immediate ceasing of this relationship.**

The Branch opposes the University's recent adoption of the anti-Palestinian IHRA Definition of Antisemitism and calls for this adoption to be rescinded: by conflating criticism of Israel with antisemitism, this definition not only provides cover to the assault on Palestine but also makes it more difficult to recognise and combat genuine antisemitism, which is also on the rise.

We further condemn the complicity of the Australian Government in supporting Israel to act with impunity.

The Branch calls on its members to stand with Palestinian members, staff, students, and the Palestinian community in their fight for freedom and to **take concrete action in support of this struggle** including **writing to MPs, attending rallies**, and **creating spaces to support truth-telling and oppose racism** – including Islamophobia, anti-Palestinianism, and antisemitism – at the University.

We will not remain
silent in the face of
genocide.