

Vice Chancellor's Office

Subject: UUK Israel-Gaza response: 26/10/2023
Attachments: Jo Grady 25th October 2023.pdf

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, October 26, 2023 11:47 AM
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External email to Cardiff University - Take care when replying/opening attachments or links.
Nid ebost mewnol o Brifysgol Caerdydd yw hwn - Cymrwch ofal wrth ateb/agor atodiadau neu ddolenni.

Dear colleagues,

In light of the ongoing impact of the war in Israel-Gaza on university communities, please find below a number of updates. We will continue to update members regularly over the coming weeks.

Best wishes,

[REDACTED]

1. Engagement with UCU

Yesterday, I wrote to Jo Grady asking for her support in maintaining good community relations on university campuses. I have asked that she consider circulating advice and guidance to UCU members on preventing and dealing with harassment, lawful free speech and remind members that Hamas is a proscribed terrorist organisation in the UK and that universities have a duty to comply with Prevent legislation. I am attaching a copy of this letter in case it is useful in conversations with your own UCU branches.

2. OfS letter sent to universities about Prevent

We are aware that the Office for Students has written to some English members regarding specific incidents on their campus in relation to the Prevent duty. We are keen to better understand the extent of OfS' activity in this space; if you have received a communication about this, please contact [REDACTED].

3. Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill

Members will be aware that the Economic Activities of Public Bodies Bill is currently making its way through Parliament. The context is likely to increase the sensitivity of debate on this Bill, and so I am writing to ask you to help us clarify our case by demonstrating the lack of support for the BDS movement in our sector.

As background, our concerns with this legislation focus on universities being included within scope of the Bill, particularly around the potential categorisation of universities as public bodies. We also believe it to be incompatible with existing regulation and guidance on academic freedom and good governance, as well as with other recent legislation such as the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023. Further details on our concerns can be found in our latest [parliamentary briefing](#).

We have worked with the former Education Secretary Rt Hon Kit Malthouse MP to raise our concerns with the Bill through an amendment seeking to exclude universities from scope of the Bill. Kit Malthouse spoke to this amendment at Report stage on Wednesday, however, the amendment was not put to a vote. We will therefore continue to build the case for exemption as the Bill moves into the Lords.

We believe it is important that we can evidence that our desire for universities to be excluded is solely based on the above concerns and not because we want universities to be allowed to take part in Boycott Divestment or Sanction (BDS) actions. In our communications, we have been clear that UUK has clearly and consistently [opposed](#) BDS, and any blanket boycott, divestment or sanction of the state of Israel.

In order to strengthen our case, I would be grateful if you would respond to a one question poll which can be found at the [following link](#). Please note, we do not intend to refer to individual universities in our lobbying. **It would greatly assist our case if we could encourage ALL members to respond to this poll.**

4. Antisemitism on campus

We understand from Community Security Trust (CST) and from speaking to members that there has been an increase in incidents of antisemitism on campuses. In the 14 days between 7 and 20 October, CST recorded at least 41 university-related antisemitic incidents across the UK. This is the highest ever total of university-related antisemitic incidents reported to CST across a 14-day period. For comparison, CST recorded 7 university related antisemitic incidents over the same 14 days in 2022, meaning there has been a 486% increase in the number of anti-Jewish hate incidents on campus.

Antisemitic incidents can be reported to the [Community Security Trust](#) via their website. Jewish students can also contact the [Union of Jewish Students](#) (UJS) for support via their Welfare Hotline on 020 7424 3288. We are continuing to engage with CST and UJS.

Antisemitism has also been the subject of parliamentary attention over the last week. During Education Oral Questions on Monday 23 October, several Conservative MPs noted the rise of antisemitism at universities, as well as the support for Hamas in the student and academic community. Recent incidents at several institutions were also highlighted. In his reply, Minister Halfon said antisemitism would not be tolerated and urged universities to prioritise the implementation of the [Taskforce on Antisemitism in Higher Education](#) recommendations.

Antisemitic incidents on campus, and general anxieties among the Jewish student community, were raised by several peers in a debate on Israel/Gaza in the House of Lords on Tuesday 24 October.

5. Islamophobia on campus

We understand that there has also been an increase in anti-Muslim harassment and hate crime. Tell MAMA has recorded a six-fold increase in cases of anti-Muslim hate between 7 October and 24 October compared to the same period in 2022. They logged 400 cases compared to 67 cases the previous year. This includes a number of incidents taking place within higher education. More information is available on Tell MAMA's [website](#).

Islamophobic incidents can be reported to [Tell MAMA](#). They also have a free counselling service for victims of anti-Muslim hate or Islamophobia which can be accessed via counselling@tellmamauk.org. We are continuing to engage with Tell MAMA. They are happy for universities to get in touch with them directly to discuss Islamophobia on campuses and how universities can provide support to Muslim staff and students. To do this, please contact info@tellmamauk.org.

6. Working with security teams

We would like to remind members of the importance of close working between universities and campus security teams. We encourage you to engage with your chief security officers in relation to the heightened risks on campus as a result of the conflict, and to ensure your chief security officers are engaging with local police and Counter Terrorism teams as appropriate.

7. Update from working group on Israel-Gaza response

As you may be aware, we have convened a working group to share information and practice regarding the conflict in Israel-Gaza. The group met for the first time on 24 October. Key challenges highlighted by the group include:

- Pressures on wellbeing support and specialist support
- Concerns about Prevent, including communications from OfS
- The balance between EDI and freedom of speech, particularly regarding 'grey areas'

- Concerns about international students and applicants
- Support for staff

The group will continue to meet over the coming weeks, including hearing from external stakeholders.

8. Next vice-chancellor roundtable

We can confirm the next vice-chancellor roundtable on responding to the conflict in Israel-Gaza will take place at 8am on Friday 3rd November.

9. PVCI network

UUKi has convened a special meeting of its PVCI network to discuss international issues arising from the conflict, including visa concerns. Please contact [REDACTED] to join the group or raise any issues.



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