

Student Idea Text

What is the issue?

For over half a century, the Palestinian people have suffered under an ongoing illegal occupation of their homeland, enduring merciless injustices that threaten their very existence. Since October 7, 2023, the Lancet Medical Journal has estimated that over 186,000 people in Gaza have been killed. Ongoing injustices also have resulted in over 625,000 students without access to education, with 7,000 of their peers tragically among the deceased. Over 1 million people are currently displaced within Gaza and over 265,000 people are facing severe food insecurity, whilst more than half of the region's hospitals are out of service.

Today, we must acknowledge these violations—not as a conflict, but as a profound human crisis. A crisis that has endured for far too long and claimed far too many lives. A crisis that demands our attention, advocacy, and action.

On Friday 19th July 2024, the International Court of Justice affirmed this by mandating an international obligation to recognise Israel's occupation of Palestine as illegal. They also advised the global community to refrain from providing assistance which aids in maintaining Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian land.

In light of this mandate, we the student body, call upon our Guild of Students; to consider ways we can stand in solidarity with the oppressed. We must seek to end the injustices suffered by the Palestinian people, advocate for justice on their behalf, and raise awareness for their cause.

Why is this issue important to both the Guild of Students and its student body?

As an overwhelming number of students and staff stand in solidarity with the Palestinian cause, the University of Birmingham—a leading global institution that prides itself on its equality, diversity, and inclusion—has a duty to support meaningful movements, amplify marginalised voices, and stand against oppression. However, the University's response has left many Palestinian students on campus, as well as those connected to Palestinians, feeling both silenced and overlooked.

Thus, recognising the cause for Palestinian liberation would reassure these marginalised voices that an institution dedicated to higher education and critical thinking, values its diverse student body.

Historically, student activism has served as a powerful force for political, economic, and social change. From the divestment campaigns during the fight against apartheid in South Africa to the SNCC's (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) role in advancing racial equality during the U.S. civil rights movement, students have consistently played a crucial role in challenging injustice. The University of Birmingham's Guild of Students also shares this legacy, as demonstrated by the student protests of 1968. Therefore, we believe that activism begins with us, as students.

With over 80% of schools in Gaza either damaged or destroyed in the current 'scholasticide', by standing in solidarity with the Palestinian cause, the Guild of Students and its student body can demonstrate its commitment to human rights, social justice, and student advocacy.

The true purpose of education is only fulfilled when it empowers us to challenge injustice and engender liberation.

Thus, we the student body, call upon the Guild of Students to insofar as permitted by general law and charity law to:

- 1. Protect the rights of students by backing their freedoms to pressure the university and promote academic boycotts as a peaceful means of student advocacy.*
- 2. Encourage students and academics to voice their opposition to collaboration with institutions and individuals alleged* to have and/or convicted of violating International Law and the human rights of Palestinian people.*
- 3. Partner with students to organise constructive action for students who are affected by the experiences of Palestinian people. This can include hosting and promoting events, lectures, workshops, and demonstrations that educate and raise awareness amongst the student body.*
- 4. Campaign for the University to provide support to students affected by the humanitarian crisis in Palestine and other crises, through financial assistance, mental health services, and academic support.*

** sourced from a recognised body such as, but not limited to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) or the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).*