

## Agenda of the AMS Advocacy Committee

9am, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022

### **Attendance**

Present: Eshana Banghu, Sylvia Fernandez, Kamil Kanji, Gabrielle Matheson, Rebecca Liu, Lawrence Liu, Matthew Ho

Recording Secretary: Mimi Neufeld and Lawrence Liu

Regrets: Saad Shoaib

Guests: Mimi Neufeld (Policy Advisor), Matthew Cheesman (Social Justice Centre), Sid Schniad (Independent Jewish Voices), Neil Naiman (Independent Jewish Voices), Dr. L. J. Slovin, Michelle Marcus (UBC Climate Justice), Mariam (Social Justice Centre and SPHR), Rachel BH (Independent Jewish Voices), Yasmin, Dawson (SASC), Hanan Pudim, Danica (SPHR), Dalia Sax, Ava katz (SaL), Adam Dobrer (SaL), Gilli Cohen (SaL)

### **Call to Order**

The meeting was retroactively called to order at 9:29am

Quorum was reached

### **Territorial Acknowledgement**

### **Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was retroactively approved at 9:29am

### **Meeting Minutes**

#### Brief updates

- VPAUA: AES launching at the end of this week. Mimi and Justin have been working on updates
- Policy Advisor: I-17 and I-18 being updated, keep your eyes open for student surveys

#### Presentation from UBC Social Justice Centre (9:07am)

(Presenters: Matthew and Mariam from SJC)

- This presentation is titled "Make Injustice a Bad Investment"
- The purpose is to vote on a motion pertaining to human rights violations in Palestine. This motion is being brought by 20 groups on campus.
- Motion:
  - "Whereas the United Nations Security Council resolution 2334 has declared that Israeli settlements in the Palestinian Territories are a "flagrant violation of international law" and that they violate Palestinian human rights.

- Whereas the United Nations has produced a database of companies which are wrongly contributing to the development of these illegal settlements.
  - And whereas this UN database includes six companies, shares of which are held by the University of British Columbia: Motorola Solutions Inc, General Mills Inc, Partner Communications Ltd, Bezeq the Israeli Telecommunications Corporation, Cellcom Israel Ltd, and Bank Hapoalim BM.
  - Whereas UBC also hold shares in three other companies that have been cited by church groups and others to be violating Palestinian human rights: Caterpillar, Hewlett Packard and Lockheed Martin.
  - And whereas UBC has a responsible investment policy and has signed onto the United Nations responsible investment program.
  - Therefore be resolved that the AMS will urge UBC and the Board of Governors to direct the UBC Endowment Fund to divest from the nine companies mentioned above.
  - Be it further resolved that the AMS will release a statement condemning the Israeli state's system of apartheid and its occupation of Palestine.”
- This is a statement of solidarity – many groups are bringing this motion
  - To emphasize, “we can’t stand idly by while our university continues to invest in human rights violations”
  - Here are some statements from members of our coalition.
    - Daniel (from Independent Jewish Voices):
      - I am a PhD student in the faculty of forestry.
      - IJV provides full support of this motion
      - We support the calls for the AMS to release a statement
      - It is imperative to speak out on the motion
      - UBC has increasingly made statements on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity, but these ring hollow
      - This divestment is a way for real action
      - The divestment asks are tangible and targeted
      - While we realize that there are Jewish people on all sides of this issue, this is not anti-Semitic. UBC Palestinian students deserve to be free from oppression.
      - AMS Advocacy Committee should vote yes
    - Matthew (SJC):
      - Support divestment as an AMS/UBC commitment to justice
    - Michelle (from Climate Justice UBC):
      - We continue to push for divestment
      - We need to build policies that build sustainable/just societies
      - Our principles demand that we stand in solidarity with those oppressed

- Climate Justice extends to all people around the world
- There are precedents to highlight the importance of this motion. Review of Amnesty international report. There are other reports that also detail this apartheid.
- We can also review other AMS motions to show that this ask is not unique. There was Hong Kong 2021. The AMS needs to be consistent in applying its values. There was the recent Ukraine statement. Also the South African apartheid motion in 1989. The AMS stood against apartheid once – the AMS should do it again.
- There are also precedents from other universities. The SFU Student Union and U of T are other comparable institutions that have released statements.
- There's also the fiscal possibility of divestment and fiduciary duty. It's a good time to invest in other portfolios. There's no financial or ethical reason for UBC to continue to invest in this.
- There is also precedent from UBC's divesting of fossil fuels. The endowment is supposed to be sustainable. UBC is also currently divesting from its Russian assets (about 0.12% of the total endowment). This would be about the same % as divesting from the aforementioned companies. The only difference between these is the matter of political will.
- What does voting yes on this motion mean for the AMS? Well it would mean 1) writing a letter to the UBC Board of Governors asking them to divest from these companies, and 2) the AMS would release a statement condemning this violence
- Why should you vote yes? Well apartheid is happening, and apartheid is bad. We have the power to stand against this

#### Advocacy Committee Discussion and Debate on Motion (9:29am)

- Kamil:
  - This motion is long overdue, it has my full support
- Gabrielle:
  - I echo Kamil. I support this motion.
  - Question: what are the church groups mentioned in the motion? Why are they authorities?
- Eshana:
  - Just a reminder that we can amend motions
- Mimi (in chat):

- “Example: Whereas UBC also hold shares in three other companies that have been cited and documented to be violating Palestinian human rights: Caterpillar, Hewlitt Packard and Lockheed Martin.”
- Matthew (SJC):
  - The church groups mentioned in the motion are holdovers from previous SPHR motions. These companies have been documented as causing harm, although they are not on the UN list
- Eshana:
  - Can we list the specific groups?
- Matthew (SJC):
  - Definitely we can specify those authors. We’ve used Investigate. Which is produced by the American Friends Service Committee
  - [Investigate: Action/Research on State Violence | AFSC Investigate](#)
  - We’ve also used Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East
  - [Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East \(cjpme.org\)](http://cjpme.org)
  - And to confirm we’re asking for the motion to ask for the divestment from these 3 companies as part of the 9 total companies to divest from
    - 6 companies from the UN list
    - 3 companies from other research
- Mimi (in zoom chat):
  - “Another example: Whereas UBC also hold shares in three other companies that have been cited and documented by Investigate (produced by the American Friends Service Committee) and Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East to be violating Palestinian human rights: Caterpillar, Hewlitt Packard and Lockheed Martin.”

**Motion:**

“Whereas the United Nations Security Council resolution 2334 has declared that Israeli settlements in the Palestinian Territories are a "flagrant violation of international law" and that they violate Palestinian human rights.

Whereas the United Nations has produced a database of companies which are wrongly contributing to the development of these illegal settlements.

And whereas this UN database includes six companies, shares of which are held by the University of British Columbia: Motorola Solutions Inc, General Mills Inc, Partner Communications Ltd, Bezeq the Israeli Telecommunications Corporation, Cellcom Israel Ltd, and Bank Hapoalim BM.

Whereas UBC also hold shares in three other companies that have been cited and documented by Investigate (produced by the American Friends Service Committee) and Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East to be violating Palestinian human rights: Caterpillar, Hewlett Packard and Lockheed Martin.

And whereas UBC has a responsible investment policy and has signed onto the United Nations responsible investment program.

Therefore be resolved that the AMS will urge UBC and the Board of Governors to direct the UBC Endowment Fund to divest from the nine companies mentioned above.

Be it further resolved that the AMS will release a statement condemning the Israeli state's system of apartheid and its occupation of Palestine.”

Eshana: Ask for unanimous consent.  
Sylvia, Matthew, Gabrielle, Kamil.

Motion passed with unanimous consent (9:46am).

- Eshana:
  - Awesome, now Council needs to see this motion. We'll put this on the Council document.
- Matthew (SJC):
  - Do we need to present at Council?
- Eshana:
  - Yes, I think so
  - Also one second, someone from Hillel house is joining the meeting right now
  - While we wait, how was everyone's weekend?
- Everyone:
  - Good 😊

[Guests join: Adam Dobrer, Gilli, Ava Katz]

Brief review of the motion.

- Ava:
  - I wish we would have gotten this in advance
  - I am the president of the Israeli Students Association
- Kamil:
  - We are still bringing this to Council

- Adam:
  - Is there precedent for the AMS to name a specific country
  - The AMS is condemning a specific nationality
  - There are 2 sides to this conflict
  
- Eshana:
  - I'm the chair, so I'm just here to facilitate conversation. You can raise your concerns at Council.
  
- Kamil:
  - Just to briefly review, there is precedent for this motion. Example: South Africa apartheid.
  
- Mariam (SJC):
  - I think there might be some misunderstanding of the motion. We're not condemning students. This is a motion aimed at companies (multi-national companies) that are violating human rights.
  - Both Jewish and Israeli students have been consulted on this motion
  - There's also precedent with the AMS statements on Ukraine and Hong Kong

Lawrence takes over as recording secretary at 9:58am.

- Adam Dobrer:
  - Again, I am also confused as to the timing of this motion and the fact that the UN was cited as a source given their history of bias so far as you might or might not be aware; Russia who has security vote has not faced condemnation
  
- Gilli:
  - This is statement that labels one country; I don't see a financial reason here you demonize one symbol of identity that is identified by so many students not inherently a type of portfolio; not like responsible fossil fuel free investment this sort of investment policy is not broad enough
  
- Mariam:
  - Personal claims about UN are not facts they are a reputable organization so any claim without source is not credible
  - You are misinterpreting our motion focusing on the inequalities Palestinians does not take away from other social issues in the world
  
- Ava Katz:
  - We have made attempt to be part of conversation, we are here to express our concerns. We were not engaged or reached out on the discussion of this topic
  
- Sid Shniad:
  - Would just like to compliment participants of this meeting on presenting fact based information
  
- Ava Katz:
  - Were Jewish or Israeli voices consulted on this motion
  
- Mariam:

- Yes they were
- Daniel
  - There was an incredible good process of consultation and collaboration towards this anti-apartheid investment
  - Also included were the entirety of Vancouver Jewish Youth Bloc (UBC students)

Meeting adjourned.