



Friday, November 1, 2024

Dr. Benoit-Antoine Bacon, President
University of British Columbia
7th Floor, Walter C. Koerner Library
1958 Main Mall
Vancouver, BC
V6T 1Z2

Dr. Bacon,

My name is Joey Hansen and I am the Executive Director of the Association of Administrative and Professional Staff at UBC (AAPS). As you are likely aware, AAPS is the largest single bargaining unit at the University and is composed of approximately 6,500 staff dedicated to advancing the research and learning missions of the University. On October 29, at AAPS' Annual General Meeting, our membership voted to have AAPS call on the University to end its complicity in human rights violations internationally, including in Gaza and Lebanon. For your convenience, I have appended a copy of that motion to this letter. I will note that this motion originated not from our Board of Directors but as a result of grassroots action by individual AAPS members.

More than 40,000 residents including more than 16,000 children have died as a result of Israel's ongoing bombardment on Gaza and most of the hospitals, universities and other critical infrastructure in Gaza have been destroyed. In January of this year, the International Criminal Court issued a ruling that it was plausible that a genocide was occurring in Gaza and issued provisional measures intended to protect Gaza's residents from genocide. Those measures have largely been ignored by Israel, which has intensified its attacks on Gaza since that ruling. Israel has also expanded its bombing campaign to include Lebanon.

AAPS calls on the University to implement a human rights framework for investing its funds including, but not limited to, those managed by UBC Investment Management, such as the Endowment Fund and Staff Pension Plan. I want to draw particular note to the funds invested by the Staff Pension Plan. Pension funds are employee's money and employees are, without their consent, being forced to fund human rights violations through their pension.

With the exception of a small number of members not eligible for the Staff Pension Plan, each of AAPS' members contributes 6.5% of their gross salary to the plan. If the Staff Pension Plan, through its investments, is contributing to human rights violations then a portion of each of our



members' contributions to the plan is funding human rights violation. It is unconscionable to use the deferred wages of employees to fund human rights violations.

The concerns of our general meeting went beyond UBC's investment strategies. There were concerns that students, staff and faculty who express support for human rights in general and the wellbeing of residents of Palestine and Lebanon more specifically would be subjected to repercussions from the University. Please accept this letter as notice that AAPS will vigorously enforce the rights of its members to speak out against violations of human rights and will resist any efforts by the University to discipline our members for doing so.

The concern goes beyond simply our members. Canadian Universities have a long history of protest and activism supporting human rights and AAPS calls upon the University to preserve the rights of all members of the University community to engage in peaceful activism free from intrusive levels of surveillance. We also call upon the University to engage in meaningful consultation with students, staff and faculty regarding the University's steps to ensure that its financial investments are free from complicity in the violation of basic human rights.

In the interest of transparency, I would like to note that, as this letter is the result of a motion at our annual general meeting, a copy of it will be circulated to the AAPS membership and posted on our website. Please note that we will also circulate and post your response to this letter, because we would like our membership to hear directly from you how it is that the University intends to address the concerns raised here.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, Lauren Casey, AAPS' President and I are happy to make ourselves available for a meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Joey Hansen' in a cursive script.

Joey Hansen
Executive Director

Copies: Lauren Casey, President, AAPS
Board of Governors, University of British Columbia
Vancouver Senate, University of British Columbia
Okanagan Senate, University of British Columbia

TITLE: Motion for AAPS to advocate against and act to end UBC's complicity in human rights violations

Primary Mover: [REDACTED]

Seconded: [REDACTED]

PREAMBLE:

Human rights violations

1. Whereas, on January 26, 2024, the [International Court of Justice announced their decision to investigate Israel](#) for the crime against humanity of genocide, given 'plausible' violations of the Genocide Convention;
2. Whereas the [International Court of Justice's advisory opinion](#) of July 19, 2024, found that Israel is in violation of the prohibitions against illegal occupation and settlement, in breach of Article 3 of the "International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination" (CERD) regarding segregation and apartheid, and "is under an obligation to bring an end to its unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as rapidly as possible";
3. Whereas a group of 37 independent human rights experts [stated on October 11, 2024](#) that Israel's "brutal escalation of violence" over the past year has resulted in "genocidal attacks, ethnic cleansing and collective punishment of Palestinians";
4. Whereas Israel's escalating military campaign in Lebanon, including attacks on [civilians, non-military infrastructure](#), and [United Nations Peacekeepers](#), has "[drawn sharp condemnation from UN experts for violations of international law](#)";
5. Whereas supporting or benefiting from these actions financially, materially, or politically constitutes complicity in these human rights violations;

The role of AAPS

6. Whereas AAPS "strives to improve the work experience at UBC" and is an advocate on issues that impact its members and our workplaces;
7. Whereas AAPS has stated commitments to "embody antiracism and reconciliation," to "advocate for and represent AAPS member interests in implementation of EDI and anti-racism plans [...] at UBC," and to champion "a just workplace";

AAPS members' roles, rights, and responsibilities

8. Whereas, AAPS states, "Management and Professional Staff play critical roles in every function of the University" and "are essential to creating a world-class institution of learning, research, engagement, and innovation";
9. Whereas AAPS members maintain the daily functioning of UBC, contribute to UBC's financial success, and sustain the Staff Pension Plan fund with our deferred wages;

10. Whereas AAPS members therefore have a right and responsibility to shape the University's trajectory and to critique major institutional decisions;

UBC's commitments and responsibilities

11. Whereas UBC must be held accountable for fulfilling the anti-racism, anti-discrimination, decolonization, and reconciliation commitments made within its [Strategic Plan](#), [Strategic Equity and Anti-Racism Framework](#), and [Indigenous Strategic Plan](#);

12. Whereas UBC Finance states, on its website, a [commitment to responsible investing](#);

13. Whereas UBC Investment Management is a signatory to the [United Nations-supported Principles for Responsible Investment](#), which calls for incorporation of environmental, **social**, and governance (ESG) issues into investment practices;

14. Whereas, in its June 30, 2023 "[Statements on Responsible Investing](#)", section 2.5(d), UBC identified **human rights** as a "key area of focus" for its approach to responsible investing;

15. Whereas UBC Investment Management has committed to [eliminate all holdings](#) in fossil fuel companies from the Endowment by 2030 under the responsible investment strategies, proving large-scale divestment is possible;

UBC's complicity

16. Whereas [analyses](#) by UBC student groups have shown the UBC Endowment Fund's investments in companies complicit in Israeli genocide, occupation, and apartheid totaled \$113,825,076 in 2023 and Dr. Benoit-Antoine Bacon's, the current President and Vice-Chancellor of UBC, [own assessment](#) of Endowment Fund investments acknowledges at least \$7,800,000 invested in complicit companies;

17. Whereas UBC President and Vice-Chancellor Bacon has denied UBC's complicity in human rights violations by [arguing that UBC's endowment fund investments are externally managed](#); however, the external management of investment funds does not negate the responsibility to ensure funds are ethically and responsibly invested;

18. Whereas AAPS members are concerned that the Staff Pension Plan funds may also be invested in companies complicit in human rights violations;

19. Whereas UBC has encouraged a culture of silence, non-action, and avoidance on this issue;

20. Whereas UBC maintains a narrative that the students, staff, and faculty who make up this University should not seek accountability nor action from UBC regarding this matter; and

21. Whereas UBC's complicity in any human rights violations, or the possibility thereof, directly impacts staff members' relationship with the University and their workplace, including their willingness to continue working at UBC;

Therefore:

PROPOSED RESOLUTION:

Be it resolved that AAPS advocate against and act to end UBC's complicity in human rights violations.

1. Be it further resolved that AAPS immediately calls for an end to UBC's financial and political complicity in human rights violations internationally, including in the ongoing bombardment of Palestine and Lebanon;
2. Be it further resolved that AAPS calls on UBC to immediately implement a Human Rights framework for investing funds including, but not limited to, those managed by UBC Investment Management, such as the Endowment Fund and Staff Pension Plan;
3. Be it further resolved that AAPS strike a committee, within two months' time, to review assets and investments in the Staff Pension Plan for companies who profit from the siege on Gaza, the decades long apartheid against the Palestinian people, and weapons manufacturing; disclose these assets to all members within 90 days of the committee forming; and advocate for the immediate divestment from these companies;
4. Be it further resolved that AAPS cease doing business with suppliers named in the [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions \(BDS\) campaign](#) within 90 days;
5. Be it further resolved that AAPS develop bargaining proposals to protect workers from being required to handle materials from companies or engage with partner institutions that are complicit in human rights violations, for the 2025 Collective Agreement negotiations;
6. Be it further resolved that AAPS always protect members from being disciplined or silenced for speaking out in support of human rights;
7. Be it further resolved that AAPS advocate to UBC leadership for protection of student, faculty, and non-AAPS staff advocates in support of Palestine and Lebanon, including, but not limited to, by calling for the elimination of police presence at related demonstrations and events, the elimination of policing and excessive surveillance of UBC community members, and prioritization of meaningful engagement with student, faculty, and staff demands; and
8. Be it further resolved that AAPS advocacy aligned with this resolution will include, but is not limited to, writing to the Board of Governors, Senate, and UBC administration and having an executive member speak in favor of any such motions or actions at public university meetings.