

## **Emergency motion**

### **Student placards**

**(for ICL UCU members meeting 14/06/24)**

#### **This branch notes:**

1. ICL students protesting about the situation in Gaza have set up an encampment, and have issued demands to college relating to IC alleged involvement in Israeli military development and investments. The student camp displays a Palestinian flag, and slogans calling for a ceasefire, condemning an alleged genocide, and supporting a free Palestine.
2. The student Jewish Society has expressed its concerns to the college management about the presence of the camp, and the feelings of offence and insecurity that the camp arouses. Some Jewish students and staff have referred to rising antisemitism on campus. Other college members have criticised the camp or aspects of its conduct.
3. College management have issued notices to students that they are likely to be disciplined about an incident in June when a placard was displayed with the Italian slogan ‘Siamo tutti antisionisti.’ When this placard was seized by security, students made others with the same sentiment (“We are all antizionists”) in a range of languages. These placards were confiscated by security in their turn.
4. Management have expressed a belief that the slogan is antisemitic or likely to be perceived that way.
5. There has been no open discussion on campus about the Israeli war on Gaza, the Hamas massacre of Israeli civilians on October 7, the prospects for release of the Israeli hostages, the atmosphere on campus between supporters of the two sides, or the role of ‘Global Imperial’ in furthering our potential educational mission to the middle east.

#### **This branch believes that:**

1. Strong opinions about the Israel/Gaza war, with its rising body count on both sides, cannot be effectively managed by disciplining or tone-policing students. This is a *frivolous* response given the grave situation of the Israeli hostages and the civilians of Gaza.

2. It is in everyone's interest to promote open dialogue with the aim of overcoming polarised positions and feelings of insecurity on all sides.
3. A university of Imperial's standing should be able to promote an intellectual response to this conflict, while validating the feelings of all members and without appearing to take sides.
4. College action over the placard suggests that the leadership takes a narrow reading of the duty imposed by the *Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023*
5. Student discipline procedures must not be used to imply college support for a political standpoint.

**This branch resolves to:**

1. To formally oppose the threat to discipline the students over the placard incident, and to send and publicise a letter calling for the threat to be withdrawn.
2. To urge management to seek other ways of resolving the stand-off between the encampment and the college and critics of the camp, and for UCU branch to act as a broker if this would be helpful.
3. To organise or otherwise facilitate an Imperial public meeting or meeting series on how to "disagree well" about Israel-Gaza.

Motion CARRIED at a quorate all members' meeting on 14/6/24