



Annual General Meeting 2024

Motions

- Reform of Budget Allocation Process for Societies
- Part-time Officers & Preferenda mechanism changes
- The SOAS SU to formally and actively oppose Minimum Service Levels
- Opposing the Protest Guidelines at SOAS
- Restoration of Disabled Students' Voice and Mandate for Transformative Accessibility
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- Ending the Hostile Environment at SOAS: Transformative Healing + Truth & Reconciliation
- To re-iterate the formal role played by the Justice For Workers Campaign and demand full engagement with the campaign from both SU and SOAS Management
- Tackling anti-democratic shifts in the SU

Motion: Part-time Officers & preferenda mechanism changes

Proposer: Co-President Democracy and Education, Reem Walid

Secunder: Co-President Equality and Liberation, Jamal Akram

This Union Notes:

1. The current democratically elected team of the Student Union comprises Co-Presidents, Preferenda Portfolio Officers, Liberation Caucus Delegates, and a Delegate from the Research Students Association.
2. The portfolio for the Preferenda Portfolio Officer roles is determined during the first Preferendum of the academic year, followed by elections for these roles.
3. Students have approached and complained to the Student Union this year, requesting a part-time officer role rather than utilizing the liberation delegate role. This issue was also raised during the election period, indicating student dissatisfaction with the current setup.
4. Attempts to implement these changes were made by the executive committee last year but at that time the 22/23 Liberation Delegates expressed a preference for the existing set up. The current executive committee agrees with the sentiment and has collectively decided on the proposed structure in this motion.

This Union Believes:

1. The current system is ineffective, as evidence from the past two years shows that the liberation delegate role and the establishment of caucuses have not been successful, despite the presence of active societies and groups on campus discussing liberation caucuses issues. These roles would be better understood and received if centrally elected, but limiting voting to the communities the posts represents.
2. The current Preferenda mechanism, which determines the portfolio of the officers before elections, creates unnecessary delays to filling the roles. It also creates a structure which lacks continuity and creates gaps in the representative structure, should a role not be established in any given year, which we believe are essential roles. All of which serves to hinder the executive committee's efficiency and campaigning responsibilities early in the year.
3. Having set part-time officer roles would enable elections and executive committee work to commence earlier in the year, aligning with peak student engagement.
4. There are other ways to provide flexibility in campaigning than having the whole preferenda structure, instead an open officer role allows for this flexibility.

This Union Resolves:

1. To adopt the following process for the next academic year:
 - a. Eliminate the Preferenda that decides the portfolio of the part-time officers.
 - b. Establish the following set roles for part-time officers:
 - i. International Student Officer
 - ii. Sustainability Officer
 - iii. Anti-racism Officer
 - iv. Afrikan Studies Officer
 - v. Mature Students Officer
 - vi. Sports Officer
 - vii. Mental Health Awareness Officer
 - viii. Distance Learning Officer
 - ix. SASS Officer
 - x. Open-place Officer (allowing flexibility in campaign ideas and responsiveness to current issues)
2. To elect liberation delegates through the same mechanisms as part-time officer roles via central elections, at the start of the academic year, representing their communities with the following roles:
 - a. Black Students Officer
 - b. Women's Officer
 - c. LGBTQ+ Students Officer
 - d. Disabled Students Officer
 - e. Trans* and Gender Identity Students Officer
 - f. Working Class Students Officer
3. To continue with having Research Students represented through a delegate from the Research Students Association (RSA) Committee.
4. To establish standing and voting eligibility criteria for the roles to students who self-define within the community that the posts represents.
5. For the Charity Trustee Board and the Executive Committee to amend the governance documents over the next year to make these changes permanent.

Motion: Reform of Budget Allocation Process for Societies

Proposer: Julen Jonas Perez Mayor

Secunder: Stella Dixon

This Union Notes:

1. The current process for assigning budget to societies are by managed by the co-president for events and activities (1)
2. Budget allocations are prone to yearly changes according to the co-president's tenures. For example, in year 2022-2023, a one-hundred-pound budget was allocated to all registered societies with the possibility of applying for more, whilst in 2023-2024, societies had to apply for a budget with a plan of their academic year's events.
3. As of the 21st of May, just over 9,000 pounds remains out of an allocated 26,000-pound budget has been used by societies (2) . This stands at 34 percent of the budget remaining and considering the inactivity of societies during term 3, it is probable to stay this way. This is a real concern as more than a quarter of money specifically reserved for student societies is not utilised.
4. No money is reserved for societies that represent disabled students.
5. There is no recorded communication from the SU or co-presidents on the reasoning of the allocations of the budget. Only three questions are asked to treasurers on their need for a budget on the website (3), but societies have had contradictory reasons for a minimised budget.
6. Numerous societies register and get an allocated budget, but then this budget is severely underused or not used at all. For example, there are instances of societies receiving quite sizeable amounts of money, but not even having one event during the academic year (4)

This Union Believes:

1. That past and future co-presidents for events and activities are elected on a mandate, but the process of allocation can be drastically improved to streamline the process for treasurers and avoid issues of planning for events with a budget that is not guaranteed. This poses an administrative issue for the SU and the societies alike.
2. The very nature of the Student Union is to involve, champion and engage with the student societies to maximise their involvement. However, we believe the sole discretion of a co-president, with the help of an unelected events and activities coordinator, in allocating a budget goes against the values of the SU.
3. A part of the budget should be reserved for societies that cater for students with disabilities and the budget should not be reserved purely for events in this instance. For example, for emergency provisions and accessibility aids when needed.
4. The SU should be pragmatic and robust in the handling of societies requesting budgets which are later not used as this is money that could be utilised for other societies and events as it works in the detriment of other societies. This also highlights the lack of accountability and general application of the budget allocation of the co-president and coordinator to mitigate against this issue

This Union Resolves:

1. Establish a standard monetary budget for every society in which extra money for a budget can be applied for. This will also resolve the need for budgets to be made in such long notice, as needs of societies can change and might not reflect what was originally needed.
2. Introduce student led forums at the start of the term on an annual basis to allocate the budget in an equitable manner, facilitated by the SU.
3. SOAS SU should reserve a sum of money for societies that aim to cater and represent disabled students to enhance the accessibility, inclusivity, and student-based support.
4. Introduce a mid-year budget review where the SU checks if societies are engaging with their budgets. If not, or for any other unsatisfactory reason, the SU should re-arrange the budget amongst other societies that need it

References:

1. <https://soasunion.org/get-involved/committeehub/financeandbudgets/>
2. https://mysoas-my.sharepoint.com/:x:/r/personal/st104_soas_ac_uk/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B7CF7EAC3-ACFE-48B3-9926-6BE69468E2F4%7D&file=Societies%20Budgets%20&%20Spending.xlsx=&nav=MTVfezJDM0VFREY1LUQzRTQtNDFCRS1CMUZFLUFGMkUzRTUzQkQ2OH0&action=default&mobileRedirect=true
3. <https://soasunion.org/get-involved/committeehub/financeandbudgets>
4. There are plenty of examples to refer to. However, we chose to refrain from naming societies as it won't be conducive to healthy debate.

Motion: The SOAS SU to formally and actively oppose Minimum Service Levels

Proposer: Alfie Bridges Smith

Seconder: Hala Haidar

This Union Notes:

1. The Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 – a piece of anti-worker legislation introduced by the Conservative government last year. This legislation introduces powers that give certain employers the ability to enforce minimum staffing levels.
2. Other Student Unions have publicly declared their opposition to this act.

This Union Believes:

1. This act is fundamentally one of class warfare, an attack on organised labour.
2. Universities must resist this legislation and that SOAS SU must actively oppose its implementation.

This Union Resolves:

1. SOAS SU and SOAS university management formally and actively oppose the Stikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023, as well as any other legislation seeking to enforce Minimum Service Levels.

Motion: Opposing the Protest Guidelines at SOAS

Proposer: Co-President Democracy & Education – Reem Walid

Secunder: Co-President Activities & Events - Maryam Choudhary

This Union Notes:

1. The SOAS administration has recently introduced comprehensive guidelines aimed at regulating student protests on campus.
2. These guidelines include specific steps and restrictions such as requiring contact with the SOAS Student Union's Events and Activities Officer, providing detailed information about the protest, and notifying the Campus Security team.
3. The guidelines also impose limitations on the time, location, and manner of protests, including blocking access to SOAS buildings (main building steps) and prohibitions of material such as placards, posters, or banners containing abusive language that will not be tolerated on site.
4. The University argues that these regulations are intended to ensure that protests do not interfere with the educational environment, maintain safety, and respect the diverse views of the community.
5. Following the 11th of March, a student was penalized for a poster that referenced the 'Fire Habib' campaign in an SU space. The student was threatened with suspension, if they did not take it down within a tight time frame. The university justified this by referencing the respect and dignity policy.
6. The SU has communicated with the University, which has not been openly receptive to proposed changes. Although the University promised to engage with us regarding security concerns, they have not followed through with active engagement outside of formal committee meetings.

This Union Believes:

1. The right to protest is a fundamental aspect of democratic engagement and academic freedom, integral to the culture and values of SOAS.
2. The new protest guidelines may unduly restrict students' ability to express their views and concerns freely and spontaneously.
3. The requirement for prior approval and detailed information could act as a deterrent to legitimate and urgent forms of protest, potentially stifling student activism. Effective protest often necessitates a degree of spontaneity and flexibility, which the current guidelines do not accommodate.
4. Many students feel that these guidelines undermine the spirit of open dialogue and dissent that SOAS traditionally supports and encourages.

5. Specific restrictions such as the prohibition against blocking entrances and the requirement to follow specific locations for protests may limit the visibility and impact of the protests.
6. While maintaining safety and respecting others' educational pursuits are important, the current guidelines may overemphasize these aspects at the expense of robust and dynamic student activism.
7. The reference to abusive language in the protest guidelines and the change in use of the Respect and Dignity Policy has been unclear and is not well specified enough, such as the use of the words 'Fire Habib'. This allows the university to pick and choose who to penalize under a disguise and arguably causing issues surrounding students' freedom of speech on campus.

This Union Resolves:

1. To formally oppose the new protest guidelines introduced by the SOAS administration, in a statement.
2. To engage in dialogue with the administration, pressuring them to provide clearer outlines of what they mean regarding the language students can use, particularly towards student-led campaigns criticizing management.
3. To propose alternative guidelines that balance the need for safety and respect for educational activities with the right to protest. These alternatives should:
 - a. Allow more flexibility in the timing and location of protests without the possibility of penalizing students.
 - b. Remove the approval process between the SU and University. Students only need to approach the SU at least 24 hours before the time of the protest. Which ensures that protests can occur spontaneously in response to urgent issues.
 - c. For the University to actively engage in solutions of what security in protests looks like, including closing of doors (prevents accessibility) and the use of cameras on personal devices to film students.
 - d. To organize a campaign raising awareness among students about their right to protest and the implications of the new guidelines, including workshops on peaceful protest.
 - e. To monitor the implementation of the protest guidelines and report any incidents where students feel their rights to protest have been unjustly restricted or penalized.
4. By taking these actions, the SOAS SU aims to build further pressure on the University. To advocate for the protection of students' rights to freely express their opinions and uphold the principles of activism central to the SOAS community.

References:

1. [Protest events at SOAS - guidelines for students \(sharepoint.com\)](https://sharepoint.com)

Motion: Restoration of Disabled Students' Voice and Mandate for Transformative Accessibility

Proposer: Stella Dixon

Secunder: Alexander Cachinero Gorman

This Union Notes:

1. According to the most recent HESA data from 2021/22, 1,085 SOAS students self-identified as disabled at enrolment (17% of the student body), while according to an FOI request 982 students were registered with the Disability and Neurodiversity Team (DNT) in 2022-23. The actual number is understood to be higher due to low self-reporting, social stigma, barriers to diagnosis, and lack of student trust in institutional means of support for their disabilities;
2. The Disability and Neurodiversity Team (DNT) has an insufficient number of part-time advisors given the amount of disabled students, with only 4 part time advisors serving a population of around 1,000 students, leading to severe delays in accessing support including SIPs;
3. Disabled students have expressed a lack of support and institutional routes for advocacy for several years in minuted meetings, forums, and Disabled Students' Society discussions, both within and beyond the SU;
4. Prior to the SU restructuring and removal of Liberation Officers, the SU previously had a Disabled Students' and Carers Officer role which was last held by Fee Henson and Amba Janiurek in 2020/21, a role previously known as the Students with Disabilities Officer which dates back to at least 2001 (see References);
5. The university has placed an emphasis on campus securitisation and building renovations without considering accessibility needs or consulting with the disabled community, and while ignoring existing access barriers including lift breakdowns, shortages of SIP carrels, lack of accessible emergency exit routes for wheelchair users in the library, digital inaccessibility of the new website, and there being no designated quiet space on campus;
6. The green in front of the SOAS quad remained inaccessible despite years of demands from students with accessibility needs for permanent ramps to be built, forcing the Liberated Zone and disabled activists to build their own ramp in May 2024;
7. The directives of senior security members indicate a widespread misuse of disabled access ramp doors, which are frequently locked in violation of the Equality Act 2010;
8. According to a recent FOI request, zero security staff and only 5% of non-academic staff have completed specific disability training;
9. The Disabled Students' Society has repeatedly witnessed the undue suffering of disabled students due to bureaucratic errors, delays, and inaccessible information and processes regarding their academic studies; and
10. Independent observers from organisations such as Disabled People Against the Cuts

(DPAC) and other private consultants have indicated that SOAS appears to be in widespread violation of disabled students' rights and needs.

This Union Believes:

1. There is likely to be a high incidence of unlawful discrimination on the basis of disability at SOAS (including both direct discrimination and blanket policies which indirectly discriminate against disabled students) which is going undocumented due to a combination of active harassment, bureaucratic fatigue and lack of belief/trust in institutional mechanisms of redress;
2. The current treatment of and discrimination against disabled students at SOAS, as well as the institutional neglect towards accessibility and disability training, is unacceptable and urgent change is required;
3. Liberation Caucuses are no substitute for formal representation by a part-time officer, because they effectively duplicate the work of student societies, do not provide a single point of contact, and are not functionally embedded in the institution due to the lack of guidance and institutional knowledge about their role and function;
4. By abolishing the formally elected Disabled Students' Officer, the SU has neglected its duty to represent, support and advocate for disabled students, severed ties of institutional knowledge and made it more difficult for disabled students to create change within SOAS;
5. Ongoing and recently completed building changes and renovations which neglect to consult disabled people are further embedding the ableist environment at SOAS, and that disabled students, disabled staff and trade unions must be directly and thoroughly consulted whenever major building changes and renovations are proposed; and
6. Change is possible, as shown by the 'fluctuating condition' reform to Mitigating Circumstances which has helped hundreds of disabled students access extensions without the need to provide (and pay for) medical evidence for an existing condition.

This Union Resolves:

1. To reinstate the position of the Disabled Students' Officer immediately and run a by-election in consultation with the Disabled Students' Society for this role at the earliest possible opportunity in September. In the meantime, a temporary Disabled Students' Officer shall be appointed by consultation between the four incoming Co-Presidents with the Disabled Students' Society to support the incoming Co-Presidents over the summer in making their work supportive of the Transformative Accessibility mandate of this motion;
2. Demand that no further building changes and renovations to take place without consulting disabled students, disabled staff, and trade unions (including the Doctoral School renovations, JCR revamp and the installation of access gates in the Main Building);
3. Advocate for the installation of a permanent ramp on both sides of the green in consultation with the Disabled Students' Society and the Liberated Zone for Gaza, with permanent changes to the accessibility of the green only taking place once satisfactory guarantees have been made to the above parties that the current ramp built by students

will not be dismantled in such a way that a gap in accessibility for ramp users is created;

4. Form a Transformative Accessibility Working Group (TAWG) which provides a space for disabled students and staff to proactively plan for and be consulted around major changes being proposed at the university. This Working Group is to be composed of the Disabled Students' Officer, members of the Disabled Students' Society Committee, elected organisational representatives of the Working Group's choosing, and any other relevant people with a stake in accessibility (such as student volunteers);
5. Invest the TAWG with the authority to produce a report with binding conclusions for SU policy upon completion, which will be used in advocacy for the implementation of its recommendations in SOAS at large. This report is to be delivered by the end of Term 1 with suggested changes around best practices, institutional priorities, and budget allocations similar to the Disabled Students' Network UCL 2020 Report & LSE 2018 Report (see References). This report shall also include recommendations on matters concerning mitigating circumstances, academic policies and teaching and learning more generally. It will be implemented urgently in Term 2;
6. Provide disability sensitivity training to SU staff and elected representatives as soon as possible, to campaign for all frontline security to be trained in disability sensitivity and de-escalation, and to advocate for the immediate cessation of all discriminatory locking of disabled access ramp doors in contravention of the Equality Act 2010; and
7. Hire more frontline advocacy staff for DNT, in line with the proportion of disabled students at SOAS, and to bring part-time staff into full-time contracts in order to accommodate the clear and consistent need from the student body.

References:

1. FOI on disability and de-escalation training for non-academic staff at SOAS: https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/disability_and_de_escalation_tra#incoming-2549662
2. FOI on number of disabled students at SOAS: https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/number_of_disabled_students_enro#incoming-2534706
3. Oldest online reference to 'Students with Disabilities Officer', SU Newsletter, 5th March 2001: <https://digital.soas.ac.uk/EK00000181/00006>
4. Equality Act 2010: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>
5. Disabled Students UK 2023 Access Insights Report: <https://disabledstudents.co.uk/research/access-insights-2023-report/>
6. Disability Discrimination Faced by UCL Students and Recommended Measures Report (2020): <https://studentsunionucl.org/articles/disability-discrimination-faced-by-ucl-students-and-recommended-measures>
7. Why are so few disabled students studying at LSE? (2018 Report): <https://info.lse.ac.uk/current-students/part-of-lse/assets/documents/Change-makers/research-archive/2019-20/28-disability.pdf>

Motion: Student Union Endorsement of SOAS Liberated Zone Demands

Proposer: Benjamin Plafker

Secunder: Sayuri Vasireddy

This Union Notes:

1. As of March 2024, SOAS had an investment portfolio of just over £57 million which is held and managed by Newton Investment Management. Approximately £9 million (16%) is invested in 15 bonds and £48 million (84%) in 71 company shareholdings and equity trust funds (ETF).
2. We have identified that at least £5 million (9.9% of the portfolio value) of this investment portfolio involves companies and ETFs that are engaged in Crimes against the Palestinian people, including through supporting illegal Israeli settlements; and/or supporting the Israeli military; and/or sustained apartheid. SOAS has invested £5,649,492.96 in companies that are involved in crimes against the Palestinian people. This includes:
3. £2,052,560.74 in Microsoft Corp Com, one of the world's largest IT companies deeply involved in the Israeli high-tech industry, Israeli Ministry of Defence (IMOD) and Israeli police.[1] In 2023, Microsoft finalised the launch of the Azure Israel cloud region.[2] This data centre hosts the AI-Munaseq app used by the IMOD and Israeli Civilian Administration to manage the issuance of permits needed by Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza.[3] In order to install the app, users need to approve terms that allow the collection and use of data for any purpose, including security, immigration and border control purposes.[4]
4. £1,624,536.09 in Alphabet Inc, whose subsidiary Google is currently working with Amazon Web Services to develop Project Nimbus, a \$1 billion cloud service technology project for the Israeli government.[5] This technology will enable the further surveillance of and unlawful data collections from Palestinians. It also facilitates the further expansion of Israel's illegal settlements on Palestinian land.[6]
5. £848,974.38 in Sony Group Corporation, a Japanese multinational conglomerate that specialises in developing and manufacturing a broad range of electronic products. According to a 2018 investigation by Who Profits, at least 6 closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras manufactured by Sony are currently used in Mabat 2000: a visual surveillance system that Israel deploys in the Old City of Occupied East Jerusalem.[9] Furthermore, Sony products — including cameras, photo lenses and microphones — have been purchased by the Israeli Ministry of Defence as recently as 2022.[10]
6. £755,707.33 in Barclays PLC which according to a 2024 report by the Campaign Against Arms Trade owns more than £2 billion in shares in 8/9 companies whose weapons, components and military technology have been used in Israel's unlawful violence against Palestinians.[11] Over the period 01/2019 to 12/2023, Barclays has also provided £6.1 billion in loans and underwritings to 7/9 of the aforementioned companies.[12] These companies include:[13] BAE Systems, Boeing, Caterpillar, Elbit Systems, and more.
7. Compared to 2021, Barclays has increased the value of its shareholdings in the identified

companies by over 55%.[14] This has been accompanied by a 70% and 98% in loans and underwritings to Caterpillar and Raytheon respectively.[15]

8. £367,714.42 in Albemarle Corp Com, a United States chemicals manufacturer, partnered with Israeli Chemicals Ltd (ICL) to supply phosphorus based flame-retardants globally.[16] From 2008 to 2013, ICL was the sole provider of white phosphorus to the US army which was subsequently deployed in the Gaza Strip in 2009 (egregious activity C).[17]
9. Since at least 2005, there has been a unified call from Palestinian civil society for an international Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel until it complies with international law and universal principles of human rights.
10. Since October, the Israeli Occupation Forces have killed over 35,500 Palestinians in Gaza, including over 15,000 children, and over 500 in the West Bank. Another 10,000 Palestinians in Gaza are missing, and almost 80,000 have been injured.

This Union Believes:

1. Despite SOAS marketing itself as a 'decolonial' institution, it has consistently failed to heed the call for BDS. There is no neutrality in genocide, which is why we strongly and unconditionally call for an end to SOAS's complicity in genocide.
2. Despite the SOAS Student Union's history of supporting the BDS campaign, the SOAS Student Union shop situated in the Junior Common Room continues to sell BDS non-compliant products. More information on this can be found [here](#) and [here](#).
3. The call for academic boycott in particular upholds, rather than contradicts, academic freedom. The boycott targets Israeli institutions that are complicit in the ongoing genocide in Palestine, and not individuals. SOAS has no business partnering with the University of Haifa, which trains IOF officers involved in the genocide in Gaza, where there are no universities left.
4. The director of SOAS Adam Habib has previously shown support for BDS in 2010. Despite this, and despite the ongoing genocide since October 7th, he has failed to heed the call for BDS and the boycott of all Israeli academic institutions.
5. The Zionist genocide against Palestinians began with the 100 + year long settler colonisation of Palestine. In light of this, SOAS' shameful partnership with the Zionist state, and its refusal to call for an unconditional arms embargo stands in stark contrast to its 'decolonial' teachings.

This Union Resolves:

1. SOAS Students' Union to endorse SOAS Liberated Zone demands:
 - a. SOAS should disclose details of all University investments immediately and continue to do so on an annual basis.
 - b. SOAS should divest from companies complicit in Israel's occupation and denial of Palestinian rights, including but not limited to Albemarle, Alphabet, Barclays, Microsoft, Newton Investment Management, and Sony, and commit to not

reinvesting in the future.

- c. SOAS should terminate the university's banking and lending arrangement with Barclays.
- d. SOAS should cut Ties with the University of Haifa and boycott all Israeli academic institutions, which are complicit in the genocidal campaign on Gaza and in widespread violation of Palestinian rights.
- e. SOAS should commit to supporting Palestinian education and the rebuilding of Gaza's destroyed schools, hospitals, and universities. Establish partnerships and exchanges with Palestinian institutions and academics, increase scholarships for Palestinian students, and advocate for the removal of restrictions on Palestinian expression and movement.
- f. SOAS should guarantee the right of students and staff to free expression and end the targeted repression of Palestine solidarity activism on campus. Revoke the new SOAS protest policy.
- g. SOAS should advocate for the UK government to implement an immediate arms embargo on Israel and to use all leverage to effect an immediate, unconditional, and permanent ceasefire.

References:

1. <https://investigate.afsc.org/company/microsoft>
2. <https://en.globes.co.il/en/article-microsoft-launches-israel-cloud-region-1001462228>
3. <https://www.whoprofits.org/companies/company/7371?microsoft>
4. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/coordinator-israel-instructs-palestinians-download-app-tracks-their-phones>
5. <https://boycott.thewitness.news/target/google>, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-picks-amazons-aws-google-flagship-cloud-project-2021-04-21/>
6. <https://investigate.afsc.org/company/alphabet>, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/oct/12/google-amazon-workers-condemn-project-nimbus-israeli-military-contract>
7. <https://investigate.afsc.org/company/alphabet>
8. <https://www.businessinsider.com/google-trump-virtual-border-wall-anduril-2020-10>
9. <https://www.whoprofits.org/writable/uploads/old/uploads/2018/11/surveil-final.pdf>
10. <https://www.whoprofits.org/companies/company/6108?6108-2>
11. <https://caat.org.uk/app/uploads/2024/05/Barclays-report-May-2024-v3-FINAL.pdf>
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15. <https://caat.org.uk/app/uploads/2024/05/Barclays-report-May-2024-v3-FINAL.pdf>
16. <https://palestinecampaign.org/psc-company/albemarle-corp/>, https://www.albemarle.com/storage/wysiwyg/antiblaze_fire_safety_solutions.pdf
17. https://www.odhe.cat/wp-content/uploads/Emp_ICLdef_CAST.pdf
18. <https://www.whoprofits.org/companies/company/6592?israel-chemicals-icl-group>

Motion: Ending the Hostile Environment at SOAS: Transformative Healing + Truth & Reconciliation

Proposer: Alexander Cachinero Gorman

Secunder: Ayaan Mohammed

This Union Notes:

1. That the Student Union has effectively lacked a Welfare Officer role for almost a whole year;
2. That students have expressed widespread discontent with the quality of Welfare services at SOAS in formal (documented, minuted) and informal settings (see Reference);
3. That students have repeatedly affirmed (in formal and informal settings) their fear of making disclosures regarding their well-being due to a lack of trust in institutional mechanisms and a pervasive fear of the racialised and politicised impacts of the Prevent duty on disclosures;
4. That two students regrettably passed away just at the beginning of 2024, with widespread community discussion on the institutional failures surrounding the events leading up to and after these deaths with concrete action demanded from students and staff for the SU and SOAS to do everything in its power to prevent more tragedies of this nature;
5. That black students in particular have expressed concern around a lack of support and institutional anti-blackness at SOAS, in particular since the start of the current Vice Chancellor's tenure (see Reference);
6. That Palestinian students have repeatedly identified in documented and informal settings the lack of support they have received from SOAS as an institution, not only historically due to repression of their voice and Palestine advocacy on campus, but in particular since the start of the most recent phase of the Zionist genocide in Gaza which is already in its 8th month with no end in sight and no proactive support for Palestinian students offered in terms of their welfare or good faith enactment of the institutional policies which would advance the welfare of their people via Boycott and Divestment (as part of the overall BDS demands advanced by the Liberated Zone for Gaza [LZ])
7. That Jewish students have repeatedly identified in documented and informal settings their concern of being ignored by the institution for having anti-Zionist/pro-Palestinian views, especially considering the unethical and undemocratic events of Fresher's Fayre 2023 in which the Union of Jewish Students' was unilaterally invited by the SU without consultation with students or Sabbatical Officers;
8. That students have repeatedly raised concerns over the lack of investment in, and support for, the Enough is Enough campaign, and the lack of adequate support for resolving matters related to sexual and gender-based harassment, discrimination, or violence;
9. That students have repeatedly raised concerns about over-securitisation, harassment from untrained security staff, and the exacerbation of unsafe fire safety conditions by policies

such as locking main exit doors and disability access ramp doors, which creates more risk of harm and death in the case of real emergencies or fires;

This Union Believes:

1. That proactive, intersectional, radically transformative care is not an 'afterthought' or a 'luxury' but crucial to the functioning of any community;
2. That the Counselling Team cannot meet the need of the extremely high volume of students who have expressed welfare needs over the last several years, and that this appears to be the opinion of Counselling Team members themselves;
3. That Muslim, Palestinian, Arab, Asian, and other racialised/marginalised students are the highest targets proportionally of the human rights-violating Prevent policy, while also being a high target demographic of SOAS's recruitment policy, putting them uniquely at risk and in need of proactive personal and political support from the Student Union (see Reference)
4. That the Decolonising SOAS Working Group's important work as an advisory body which may have been able to intervene on some of these matters has been regrettably stalled, with many of its recommendations/analysis not taken seriously by SOAS as an institution (see Reference);
5. That all students, but especially incoming students, are often made unaware by institutional neglect of established policies which would help them advocate for themselves until quite late in their academic career, from simple Self-Certifications for assignments to the Humanitarian Crises exception to the Mitigating Circumstances policy, to the process for granting and implementing Study Inclusion Plans (SIPs), leading to some students having to take time off from their studies entirely due to the lack of proactive support in these areas (see Reference);
6. That at its current rate student wellbeing and even life is at risk of further reckless endangerment and harm;

This Union Resolves:

1. To immediately begin advocating for the expansion of the Counselling Team, hiring more full-time staff and bringing part-time staff in-house;
2. To immediately begin advocating for the expansion of the Enough is Enough campaign, hiring more staff and bringing the historical learning from that campaign into conversation with the Transformative Welfare Working Group (see below);
3. To support the incoming Welfare & Campaigns Co-President in addressing the complex historical harm caused by the lack of the Welfare Officer on campus and the harms identified by students at SOAS in the last several years (from SOAS management as well as that of the SU) by forming a Transformative Welfare Working Group (TWWG). The TWWG's members will be appointed from amongst students and staff under the direction of the incoming Welfare & Campaigns Co-President and the other Co-Presidents in consultation with the student body.
4. To invest the TWWG with the authority to recommend binding policy to the SU regarding

healing from historical harm, the establishment of new confidential reporting mechanisms, and mass education around welfare- and wellbeing-impinging policies like Prevent to better equip students to address and de-escalate harm when it occurs, and advocate for a change in institutional priorities where harm is structural/systemic (such as in prioritising settlement payments after harm has already occurred over harm reduction which would avoid costly legal pay-outs in the first place) (see Reference);

5. To invest the TWWG with the authority initiate a Truth and Reconciliation Process (TRP)– in consultation with expert organisations and collectives working around transformative justice and institutional healing, as well as important constituent bodies at SOAS such as its various black and Afro-descendent and Palestinian communities–which will begin to collate/document incidents of harm, offer public findings on the scale and nature of said harm, and recommend binding SU policy regarding these findings. The TRP will help to create public and confidential space through one on one conversations, panels, and healing circles to move SOAS away from the hostile culture in which it is entrenched;
6. To intervene in all hiring processes which have an impact on student wellbeing, including Chaplaincy services, Student Hub hires, and any future senior management positions, in order to ensure democratic compliance with SU mandates and in order to avoid repeating systemic harms caused by unprofessional and rushed hiring processes of the past;
7. To advocate for the de-securitisation of SOAS and other institutional re-orientations of priorities (such as a reduction in senior management compensation) in order to financially accommodate needed Welfare hires.
8. To proactively advocate and campaign for the cessation of all hostility towards recognised trade unions on campus, the main mechanisms by which employees can seek independent redress for not only labour issues, but welfare-related matters at their workplace
9. To endorse Co-Presidents campaigning along with the existing demands of the student body to overhaul the Mitigating Circumstances policy entirely away from a punitive model (which increases distress for students in times of great distress), and moves the burden of investigation and furnishing ‘evidence’ towards *after* crisis has been resolved, and students are *believed* and *supported* before they are *interrogated*
10. To advocate for the de-securitisation of the SOAS campus, including the cessation of surveillance of student political expression and the building of ‘watchlists’, and no additional CCTV, turnstiles, or ‘Protest Response Teams’--all suggestions independently confirmed by multiple participants and witnesses to the investigation of students suspended for Palestine advocacy this last academic year
11. To support direct negotiations between the LZ and management re: BDS, and enhanced welfare provisions for Palestinian students

References:

1. December 2023 Emergency Anthropology Departmental Forum on the Hostile Environment at SOAS: <https://drive.proton.me/urls/4Z2YVSBVR0#sK6ARbHMQVFU>
2. SOAS African/Caribbean Society Statement after March student death:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/C4eQLCRoJ7G/?igsh=bnJjeXpzeWkxZmdv>

3. Solidarity Detainee Support Statement on the history of anti-blackness at SOAS:
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C7E-ixfIFxE/?igsh=OGQ5YmpIM3g0M2c1>
4. FOI on Legal Fees and Out-of-Court Settlements Relating to Discrimination and Breaches of Contract at SOAS:
https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/detailed_breakdown_of_legal_fees#incoming-2661522
5. Article regarding Vice Chancellor's invocation and refusal to apologise for the use of an anti-black racial slur: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/adam-habib-resume-soas-director-role-after-n-word-probe>
6. Decolonising SOAS Working Group 2020 Statement on Black Lives Matter:
<https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/decolonisingsoas/2020/06/29/the-decolonising-soas-working-group-statement-in-support-of-black-lives-matter/>
7. SOAS Mitigating Circumstances Policy for those affected by Humanitarian Crises:
<https://www.soas.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-10/Mitigating%20Circumstances%20Policy%202022-23.pdf>
8. Eroding Trust: The UK's Prevent Counter-Extremism Strategy in Health and Education (Justice Initiative): <https://www.justiceinitiative.org/publications/eroding-trust-uk-s-prevent-counter-extremism-strategy-health-and-education>
9. Together Against Prevent: <https://togetheragainstoprevent.org/>
10. Peoples' Review of Prevent: <https://peoplesreviewofprevent.org/>

Motion: To re-iterate the formal role played by the Justice For Workers Campaign and demand full engagement with the campaign from both SU and SOAS Management.

Proposer: Alfie Bridges Smith

Seconder: Hala Haidar

This Union Notes:

1. This union notes that on 12th June 2009, SOAS shamefully orchestrated with the border regime an 'Emergency Staff Meeting', in which members of the cleaning team were called into the DLT Lecture Theatre. 40 immigration officers appeared from behind objects, leading to several workers being detained. 9 were eventually deported, including a pregnant woman. The child later born was named 'Lucas'. SOAS is actively complicit in the violence of the state. It is an institution that has frequently shown disregard for its workers, its students and its wider community. Every year, the Justice For Workers (J4W) Campaign holds a commemoration to mark this historic and shameful event.
2. This union notes that the Justice For Workers Campaign (J4W) is one of the major student campaigns of SOAS. This union notes that J4W is a formally recognised and SU-backed campaign. This union notes that both SOAS and SU Management have downplayed the role of J4W and have actively refused to recognise, meet with and/or cooperate with J4W, despite the official status of J4W.

This Union Believes:

1. This union believes that SOAS as an institution remains complicit in the violence inflicted by the state upon migrant workers. This union also believes that SOAS is fully responsible for the deportations that occurred. Whilst no action could ever reverse the decision made by SOAS, nor make the action forgivable, the demand made by the J4W Campaign to formally rename the DLT the 'Lucas Lecture Theatre', must be met.
2. This union believes that re-asserting J4W's official role and student support for the campaign is essential in aiding the struggle of workers at SOAS.

This Union Resolves:

1. This Union resolves that the DLT Lecture Theatre be officially renamed the Lucas Lecture Theatre in honour of all those deported.
2. This union resolves that the SU formally re-iterates the official status of the Justice For Workers Campaign (J4W) and lobbies SOAS management to work with J4W.
3. This union resolves that the SU should support J4W's campaign goals, which include resisting outsourcing and agency hiring at SOAS, hiring more in-house cleaners, providing English lessons for staff, backing SOAS UCU and SOAS UNISON's demands including better pay and working conditions, and no cuts to IFCELS.

4. This union resolves that the SU should consult SOAS UNISON on major decisions such as renovations, to ensure their input is considered.
5. This union resolves to engage in collective decision making with its recognised trade union for student workers.

NOTE: DRAFT FINAL WORDING TO BE CONFIRMED

Motion: Tackling anti-democratic shifts in the SU

Proposer: Abel Harvie-Clark

Seconder: Safia Amina Shaikh

This Union Notes:

1. That the SOAS Student Union (SU) adopted a new constitution in summer 2022, which was approved by less than 100 members in a referendum
2. That under the new constitution, the SU now has a 'CEO' role, which has replaced the previous role of general manager
3. That there has not been a properly formed executive board for the majority of the 2 years since the adoption of the new constitution
4. That there has not been any general meetings in the academic year 2023/24 before the AGM
5. That the new constitution places significant power into the hands of the SU Trustee board, the majority of whom are not elected, to potentially overrule decisions of the student body

This Union Believes:

1. The new constitution is not working, or it is designed to stifle the democratic life of the union
2. Managerial structures in the SU have constrained the freedom of elected officers to carry out democratic mandates. For example, the statement on the genocide in Gaza proposed by Sabbatical Officers in November 2023 was watered down first by the Trustee board, and secondly by SU Staff
3. Students and their elected representatives should be the driving force of the union, with elected staff only working to support the democratic mandate set by students
4. Lack of contact and transparency between SU staff and student body has contributed to a lack of trust of the Union altogether
5. General meetings are an important function of union democracy, providing a forum to propose and debate on issues vital to the wellbeing of SU members
6. The failure of the democratic functions in the past two years has contributed to a lack of contact and accountability between students and elected sabbatical officers, leading to the overall demise of the SU's ability to contribute to student welfare and wellbeing

7. The SU constitution requires serious changes
8. Changes to the SU should be designed through a student process
9. Employed, managerial staff do not understand the specific context of student culture at SOAS to implement any kind of strategy with regards to the overall union direction, or the commercial strategy

This Union Resolves:

1. To recommend to the Board of Trustees:
 - a. That there will be a constitutional amendment process. A student working group, which may want to draw input from SOAS staff and other community members, will carry out a collaborative process to create amendments to the Constitution.
 - b. That this working group will be organised by the Co-President for Democracy and Education 2024/25 and meetings will be open to all students
 - c. That the Constitutional Amendments should be brought to a referendum of students before 31st October 2024, and if approved, enacted by the Board of Trustees.
 - d. To ensure an open nomination period for all student trustees to be nominated by the student body
 - e. To put on hold incoming Strategy project and Commercial strategy plans, to be reviewed by the incoming Sabbatical officers

