

7 May 2024

**Statement by Concerned Stellenbosch University individual Senators, regarding the ongoing genocide and destruction of the education sector in Gaza**

As undersigned individual members of Senate at Stellenbosch University, we feel compelled to address the university Senate's position on the genocide in Gaza.

We express deep dismay at Senate's rejection of a motion calling for a ceasefire and an end to the genocide in Gaza. We wish to register our dissenting views and call on Senate to reconsider its stance. We stand united in advocating for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and for the preservation of the education sector from further destruction.

Furthermore, we urge the Council and Convocation of the University to take a clear position against the decimation of the education system and daily existence in Gaza.

No South African higher education institution can claim 'autonomy' when it comes to opposing racism, genocide, apartheid, and the violation of fundamental human rights. We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the adoption of the resolutions outlined below.

Our commitment to the call for a ceasefire in Gaza, as outlined in the motion that was defeated in Senate and communicated through a public statement signed in our individual capacities (Daily Maverick, 11 April 2024), remains steadfast. It is important to note that a significant portion of Senate did support the motion, and more endorsed the public statement. Despite the prevailing sentiment in Senate, there are many progressive voices at Stellenbosch University, dedicated to transformation and justice both in rhetoric and action.

There are those who may claim that collective institutional condemnation of crimes against humanity and gross human rights violations somehow encroaches on academic freedom. We disagree. We are concerned, furthermore, by what we view as deep-seated small pockets of conservatism within Stellenbosch University, which we vehemently oppose. We are also troubled that Stellenbosch University, with its commitment to addressing the wrongs of its past and its role in apartheid, which was declared a crime against humanity by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966, has failed to vote to condemn apartheid and genocide in Gaza.

As the highest academic decision-making body of the university, Senate bears a moral obligation to champion justice, peace, and equity for all. We expect clear moral leadership from our Senate. We view such moral leadership to be at the heart of the University's vision to 'advance knowledge in service of society' and its self-proclaimed mission to be 'a place connected to the world ... enriching and transforming local, continental and global communities'. We therefore call on the Senate to revisit its decision to reject the motion and call for proper inclusive and rational debate of the motion in the Senate and the broader campus.

We:

1. *Call for an immediate ceasefire and the cessation of attacks on civilians in Gaza and Israel, the passage of humanitarian aid, the return of all captives, including the safe return of hostages captured by Hamas, and the immediate release of all unjustly detained Palestinians from Israeli prisons.*
2. *Condemn the destruction of the education sector in Gaza and the massive scale of killing of teachers and university staff in the current war.*
3. *Urge the international community to ensure that the provision of humanitarian aid includes the restoration of the education sector in Gaza.*
4. *Express our concern and opposition to any attempts to curtail academic freedom by labelling criticism of Israel or Zionist policies as antisemitism.*
5. *Reject the definition of antisemitism by the IHRA.*
6. *Express our support for academic colleagues in Gaza who are surviving under appalling conditions and our intention to assist (as best as possible) in the rebuilding of the academic sector after the war.*
7. *Express our solidarity with academic colleagues victimised for their willingness to speak out against the destruction of the education system in Gaza.*

As a university, we bear a unique responsibility to denounce the scholasticide wrought by Israel's actions in Gaza. The ongoing destruction of Gaza's educational infrastructure by Israel constitutes a grave and enduring harm to the educational prospects of an entire generation of Gazan children, students, researchers and academics. Since October 7, 2023, Israel has subjected all 11 universities in the Gaza enclave to bombing, leaving approximately 90,000 Palestinian students unable to pursue their university education. The loss of life among students has tragically surpassed 4,237, with over 7,800 sustaining injuries. Moreover, the IDF's targeting has resulted in the destruction or damage of eight dedicated libraries and four university libraries.

Such egregious actions demand unambiguous condemnation. Anything less would signify a failure to fulfil our moral and ethical obligation to oppose one of the most brutal forms of educational devastation inflicted upon a population.

Signed:

1. Prof Ashraf Kagee
2. Prof Faadiel Essop
3. Prof Desmond Painter
4. Prof Aslam Fataar
5. Prof Geo Quinot
6. Prof Soraya Seedat
7. Prof Steven Robins
8. Prof Herman Wasserman
9. Prof Nadine Bowers Du Toit
10. Prof Juliana Claassens
11. Prof Mark Swilling
12. Prof Lesley Le Grange
13. Prof Ian Couper
14. Prof Lou-Marie Kruger
15. Prof Louis Jonker
16. Prof Sandy Liebenberg
17. Prof Ronelle Carolissen
18. Prof Pieter Fourie
19. Prof Nuraan Davids
20. Prof Samantha Sampson
21. Prof Craig Kinnear
22. Prof Reggie Nel
23. Prof Robert Vosloo
24. Prof Marianne Strydom
25. Prof Donita Africander
26. Prof Jeremy Punt
27. Prof Clive Gray
28. Prof Mehita Iqani
29. Dr Therese Fish
30. Ms Ellen Tise
31. Prof Kathryn Chu
32. Prof Quinette Louw
33. Prof Lambert Engelbrecht
34. Prof Mark Tomlinson
35. Prof Cas Wepener
36. Prof Amanda Gouws
37. Prof Henk Botha
38. Prof Bruce Anderson

39. Prof Shannon Hoctor
40. Prof Louise Du Toit
41. Prof Savel Daniels
42. Prof Razeen Davids
43. Prof Selwyn Mapolie
44. Prof Soraya Bardien
45. Prof Andries Visagie
46. Mr Rubeshan Nayager
47. Prof Jonathan Carr
48. Prof Tina Steiner
49. Prof Léanne Dreyer
50. Prof Susan van Schalkwyk
51. Prof Lize van Robbroeck
52. Ilhaam Groenewald
53. Prof Sarah Skeen
54. Prof Marlo Möller
55. Irfaan Dalvie
56. Prof Tania Ajam
57. Prof Johann Mouton
58. Prof Johann Rohwer
59. Ms Miriam Hoosain
60. Prof Lieketseng Ned
61. Dr Leslie van Rooi
62. Prof Xikombiso Mbhenyane
63. Prof Martha Geiger
64. Prof Anita Cloete
65. Prof Kopano Ratele
66. Prof Zwelinzima Ndevu
67. Prof Nico Koopman
68. Reagan Johnson, SRC Executive
69. Prof Kathy Myburgh
70. Prof Sadulla Karjiker
71. Dr Kelebogile Choice Makhetha
72. Prof Taryn Young
73. Prof Anna-Mart Engelbrecht
74. Prof Michael le Cordeur
75. Prof Estelle Swart
76. Prof Bernard Wessels
77. Prof Bernard Dubbeld
78. Prof Mawande Dlali

79. Dr Kathryn Smith
80. Prof Sally Ann Murray
81. Prof Michael Cherry
82. Ass Prof Lana van Niekerk
83. Prof Leslie Swartz
84. Prof Corne Schutte
85. Prof Catharine Esterhuysen
86. Prof Wikus van Niekerk
87. Prof Lynette van Zijl
88. Prof Nicola Smit
89. Amory Smith, AAC Representative
90. Bantubonke Louw
91. Prof Andrew Whitelaw
92. Prof Sam Tshehla