



# HISA Exec Statement on Gaza

The Highlands and Islands Students' Association expresses its support for all in our community who are being affected by the terrible ongoing situation in Gaza and Israel. We are deeply saddened by the violence taking place, and we are horrified by the loss of Israeli and Palestinian civilian lives resulting from this conflict.

We stand in support of all our members impacted by these tragic and distressing circumstances. Our thoughts are especially with those in our student community who have loved ones in the region, or who are grieving for those lost in the conflict. No one should have to endure violence and devastation like this. While we have not produced a statement sooner, this is due to our members not expressing their views directly to HISA but now we have had students across UHI ask us on our position on the conflict. After discussions as an Executive, we felt appropriate to come out with a statement.

*As your elected Officer team, we are not experts in dealing with conflicts of this nature, nor do we have the answers for its resolution. We do however passionately believe in peace, and that both Palestinian and Israeli people have the right to live in peace. A peace that promotes freedom from violence, terrorism, and fear. The violence that is being experienced by civilians due to this conflict is unacceptable and cruel, and its effect of prolonging a cycle of suffering need to cease. This is why we Officers are in support for a call for ceasefire and end the violence and oppression on innocent civilians.*

We recognise there may be some strong views within our community regarding what has happened so far and may yet happen, and we support our members' rights to express their views within the law. We are also aware that incidents of antisemitism and Islamophobia can increase when the conflict in Israel and Palestine escalates. Palestinians, Israeli, Jewish, or Muslim Students (or indeed people of any Nationality or faith) are not responsible for the actions of the Israeli or Palestinian authorities. Any targeting, intimidating, or otherwise blaming any member of our community for events in Israel or Gaza is harassment and potentially unlawful. Racism, including antisemitism and Islamophobia, has no place in our diverse and inclusive community.

At this incredibly difficult time, we urge everyone to understand that staff and students may be feeling afraid, uncertain, or unsafe. We celebrate the fact that we are a diverse and inclusive community, and this is demonstrated in our compassion and providing support for one another. We have several support mechanisms which we urge staff and students to use. These are detailed below. We are also committed to identifying if there are additional services required to better support our community.



### **Support for students**

Our University counselling and wellbeing services and HISA continue to offer students help, advice, and a safe space to talk about any concerns and issues.

Any students experiencing anxiety or wellbeing adversely impacting their studies, please contact your AP to discuss support or mitigating circumstances. The HISA advice service can also provide impartial advice and support around mitigating circumstances and wider support.

### **Reporting abuse**

If any student experiences or witnesses any harassment or abuse, report via XXX. We would urge the reporting of all incidents as this is a key way in which we can understand experiences and take appropriate action.

### **Vigils, protests and freedom of speech**

The University is committed to supporting free speech within the law, which means a shared tolerating of a wide range of views while respecting the rights of others. UHI's advice for students can be found here YYY

We would remind everyone of the legal limits of free speech. Antisemitism, Islamophobia, abuse, or harassment of any kind is not acceptable. The University does not support any views or actions which seek to exclude or make Jewish, Muslim or any other people unwelcome on campus. We therefore remind all members of our community that they must treat each other with respect and courtesy, be mindful of the language they use and consider the impact that it can have on others, whether unintended or not.

**- HISA Executive Committee (2023-24)**