

REFERENDUM NOTIFICATION - RESULT

BY ORDER OF THE RETURNING OFFICER (on 8 December 2023)

Referendum Result

A Students' Union Referendum took place from Tuesday 5 December (8.00 a.m.) to Thursday 7 December 2023 (8.00 p.m.) with polling taking place on the Students' Union website, to determine the opinion of the membership on the following question:

Proposal 1 - Decolonise, Demilitarise and Democratise Queen's University Belfast

Background:

- Queen's University Belfast handles its investments through BlackRock, the largest investor into oil, gas and coal of any investment management company.
- Queen's University Belfast, via BlackRock investment management fund, invests its money into companies such as Elbit Systems, which is an Israel based defence electronics company that creates spy-ware and military aircraft that are utilised in the illegal occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, contributing towards 85% of Israeli arms.
- Blackrock also invests in banks that use funding to prop up illegal settlements in the West Bank, in violation of International Law.
- Queen's University Belfast also has strong academic and partnership ties to the Thales Group, an arms company which specialises in the development of missile systems. These are sold to governments which have a record of using these weapons to subjugate workers, attack refugee camps and destroy communities. Thales also jointly operates with Elbit Systems on the manufacture of Israeli drones. Queen's works with Thales to provide placements for students.
- Queen's University Belfast has a long-standing relationship with BAE Systems, which over the course of the Saudi-Yemeni War, sent £16.7 billion to the Saudi Arabia government. This conflict has directly killed nearly 20,000 Yemeni civilians. There were numerous allegations of bribery levelled at BAE Systems and their political involvement has been substantial in the UK and the US. It is also a major seller to Turkey which is operating a bombing campaign in Rojava/North and East Syria.
- Queen's University Belfast's Chancellor Hilary Clinton has been a strong supporter of colonialism and has openly supported the bombing campaign against Gaza which has led to over 10,000 dead including over 4,000 children.
- Many of the civilians of this war have been killed while in refugee camps.
- Due to the decentralised nature of Schools and Faculties, there are ties to the military and to fossil fuel industry that are yet unknown.

The Students' Union Has the Following Related Policy Positions:

- *An Antifascist and Antiracist Students' Union* (Policy Ref: COM/2022/6/7) and *Anti-Fascism & Anti-Racism* (Policy Ref: COM/2019/6/2) which solidify QSU as an antifascist and antiracist union.

- *Establishing a Campaign to Make QUB a University of Sanctuary* (Policy Ref: COM/2018/6/2) which supports the University to become a University of Sanctuary.
- *Justice and Human Rights for Palestine* (Policy Ref: OTH/2016/8/10) that maintains the Union supporting human right and justice in Palestine and the Union's support for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions of the Israeli occupation.
- *Fossil Fuel Divestment* (Policy Ref: OTH/2015/8/2) Motion 8.05 which calls for the divestment of all fossil fuels by Queen's University Belfast, and *Amendments to the QUB Green New Deal* (Policy Ref: DGR/2021/4/1) which included a demand for fossil fuel divestment, which has been incorporated into the University's Strategy 2030 corporate plan.

Queen's Students' Union Believes that:

- A university should not act as a funnel for fossil fuel companies or the military industrial complex.
- Sheltering investments through BlackRock is a move taken to avoid accountability for unethical investment practices.
- BlackRock's large portfolio of fossil fuel companies, arms companies, unethical banking practices and more undermines the principles behind the great work done to reach Net-Zero carbon emissions and any attempts to become a University of Sanctuary.
- Queens should not invest in or collaborate with companies that trade arms to countries that violate international law.
- The military-industrial-academic-complex creates incentives to support the psychological, moral, and material interests of colonial markets and the destructive enterprise of war.
- University financial and academic ties should reflect the values of the students, staff and academics who make up the University.
- The University's decisions should not be based around the interests of profit but the interests of the staff and the students that make up the University.
- That, given the current model of university-for-profit, there should be democratic accountability for any and all partnerships, research and investments to ensure these are representative of the ethos and values of the constituents that make up the University.
- If the University wants to become more international, it should take an active and public stance on promoting peace and equality internationally and oppose colonisation and occupation.
- If the University wants to become a University of Sanctuary, it should not have a relationship with organisations which cause displacement and are used to target refugee camps.
- If the University wants to be seen as a symbol of peace, it cannot have Hilary Clinton representing it as Chancellor while she continues to make statements that condone and support war crimes and ethnic cleansing.

- The University cannot claim to have a neutral stance on the Israel-Palestine issue while it is financially, politically and culturally supporting a state which is committing atrocities.

Queen's Students' Union Agrees:

- That the Union put pressure on the Senate, the Planning and Finance Committee, the Investment Committee, and the respective Schools for the University to cut all contact with any organisations which supply arms to states or institutions which violate international law.
- That the Union put pressure on the Senate, the Planning and Finance Committee, and the Investment Committee to completely divest from Blackrock.
- For any replacement for Blackrock must be reviewed by a group involving democratic representation from all Unions on Campus.
- That the Union put pressure on the Senate and any 'Special Committee' (set up to appoint a Chancellor) to dismiss Hilary Clinton as Chancellor and to boycott and organise protests against any events she attends as Chancellor of this University.
- That the Union put pressure on governmental reform within the University to ensure that the Investment Committee, Planning and Finance Committee and Senate have at least 50% voting membership given to the Unions representing the students and workers on campus.
- That the Special Committee must include a 50% voting membership to the decision to appoint a Chancellor.
- That the decision of the Special Committee must be put to a referendum across all staff and students.

AGREE 1523 88.71%

DISAGREE 172 11.29%

1545 students voted in this Referendum, representing 6.26% of eligible voters.

22 students recorded an abstention and therefore did not agree or disagree with the proposal.

The proposal is carried and is deemed to be a valid expression of the views of the members of the Union.

A full copy of the proposal is available from the Returning Officer, or from the Students' Union website.
(<http://www.q-su.org/>)