

## **Policy Proposal: Lobby to end UCL's relationship with arms companies**

### **What would you like the Union to do?**

The union should mandate the following:

1. Lobby UCL to include sponsorships under the same ethical guidelines that they use for investments and for the university to work with the Sabbatical Officers on strengthening those guidelines
2. SU to condemn any events on UCL campus promoting arms trade companies alleged to be complicit in human rights abuse
3. SU to encourage UCL to invest in more ethical companies, with values consistent with UCL's reputation as a humane, progressive and respectful institution.

### **Why would you like to do this?**

BAE systems currently sponsors UCL Centre for Ethics and Law, which is incongruous with its purpose. Why do we as students feel passionate about this? It leads to a lack of faith in the usage of our tuition fees and ruins the credibility of our association with an institution. UCL prides itself on being a leading university, a global university - this motion allows us the opportunity to pave the way for change, and set the standard for more ethical and moral financial practices.

BAE systems invests about £10-15 million annually in UK universities. £10m on research and technology and the remainder on learning and development activities. Universities are failing to recognise the devastating impact on human rights, security, and economic development their investments have. We would like this motion to be passed as we believe the ends do not justify the means. We want to ensure that our learning experience is not funded by companies which contribute to war crimes globally.

- BAE systems - Yemen

BAE systems and similar organisations benefit from long established relationships with universities by promoting graduate schemes, hiring graduates and expanding their networks. BAE systems are known to be primary partners in multi-billion-pound arms contracts and are involved in the manufacture of aircrafts, Typhoon and Tornado, which have undoubtedly been used in war. BAE Systems have and continue to benefit from unethical campaigns and armed conflict. They are reported to have sold £15bn worth of arms and services to the Saudi military during the airstrikes against Yemen, and thus are profiting from what has resulted in the largest humanitarian crisis in the world.

- BAE systems/Elbit Systems

On 01/04/21, Elbit Systems announced the acquisition of BAE Systems Rokar International Ltd from BAE systems for approximately \$31 million. Elbit Systems is Israel's largest private arms manufacturer and current supplier of drones and surveillance technology to the Israeli Defence Force (IDF). Surveillance technology has been used to maintain the checkpoints and the Israeli separation wall through the West Bank, which has been deemed illegal under international law. Similar Israeli annexation barriers have been built around the Gaza strip and the northern border separating Lebanon and Syria. The Hermes 900 Drone was in fact field tested on Palestinians in Gaza during the 2014 bombing campaign and has since been exported to 31 other countries. UCL'S ties with BAE and subsequently Elbit Systems normalise the illegal occupation of Palestinian Territories and oppression of its people.

Elbit Systems have also been accessory to the war crimes in Burma by selling military equipment to the Burmese Military used during the ethnic cleansing of Rohingya. The estimated arms deal amounting to tens of millions of dollars have supplied military patrol boats (Super-Dvora MK III) with an Elbit Systems built-in remote weapon station; which are used to attack Rohingya refugees fleeing to Bangladesh.

Elbit System also secured border contracts worth \$187 million from the US government, to install high-tech security surveillance towers near Trumps US-Mexico border for the Border Protection (CBP) agency. The militarisation of the US border has led to the violation of indigenous Tohono O'odham and Hia Ced O'odham human rights through the restriction of movement, disruption of cultural practices and abuse by border agents.

- Success stories:

St Andrew's university adopted and is currently implementing an Ethical Investment Strategy where the university withdrew shares in arms companies and adopted clean investment policies to ensure no new shares are bought.

SOAS university ended contracts with arms trade companies and sold its 62,000 shares in major British arms companies after the Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) published a list of 67 UK universities holding such investments. UCL ought to be more transparent about its investment in such companies and should lead by example and work towards adopting a more ethical policy.

"Both government and industry are pushing greater military involvement in university research, but refuse to address ethical concerns about arms exports to human rights abusers, nuclear weapons modernisation programmes, or the dangers of new robotic weapons technology. So we strongly urge academics to look for alternative sources of funding, such as the environmental and health sectors."- Stuart Parkinson (executive director of Scientists for Global Responsibility)

### **How will this affect students?**

- UCL is involved in arms company funding through investments, sponsorships or through graduate schemes and careers fairs- that allow students to gain more exposure to arms companies. This motion provides a method to reduce exposure and funding for such companies.

- The aforementioned arms companies participate and aid Israeli war crimes and apartheid and the war in Yemen. As students we cannot be part of an institution that partners with such companies resulting in our institution being an accessory to Israel's many violations of international law.

-Students are unknowingly abetting in unethical practices globally by paying fees which are being used in immoral ways. This motion provides peace of mind to students knowing that the SU is doing all it can to ensure that the institution's investments are ethical in nature.