

## **Policy Proposal: Student Internationalism and Solidarity**

A composite proposal taken from submissions by:

- NUS Trans Officer
- Students' Association of the University of the West of Scotland

### **Summary**

Policy was passed at National Conference 2020 in relation to climate justice. This is a proposal which aims to complement that by looking at other issues where students can input into international campaigns in relation to three specific countries, Hungary, Brazil and Palestine. In these countries, we see violations of students rights to education, principles of academic freedom and the human rights abuses more broadly. In this context, we need to campaign to get students educated and motivated to work on these issues, and develop relationships of solidarity with relevant organisations in the UK and in each relevant country.

### **What's the situation?**

The history of student movements have been ones of solidarity. In 1973 NUS was the first non-LGBT organisation to make pass policy in favour of gay rights, a decade before trade unions began to do so. Students played an important role in anti-apartheid campaigns in relation to South Africa. The student movement pioneered ethical and ecological investment and production policies in the sector, campaigns which continue to this day in the midst of the climate crisis.

Student movements across the globe have stood in solidarity with each other, a principle that NUS continues to uphold through membership of the European Students Union which has fought fearlessly for UK students' rights post-Brexit. Indeed, the student movement in the UK has extended solidarity to and took inspiration from student movements in other countries, with solidarity with the Rhodes Must Fall movement provoking conversations in the UK around the ongoing impact of colonialism in education.

It is in this context that NUS must continue to show its solidarity with student, worker and liberation movements across the globe, both with specific groups and more broadly with the impact of the climate crisis. This policy focuses therefore on groups in Hungary, Brazil and Palestine.

Hungary is currently under a right-wing government, where the executive has been granted sweeping emergency powers. This is in the context of threatening academic freedom by forcing the closure of the Central European University, banning the teaching of gender studies and exercising greater control over at-arms-length research funding bodies.

On Tuesday 31st of March, the Hungarian government unveiled an Omnibus Bill under the powers handed to Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to deal with the Covid-19 crisis. Under article 33 of this proposed bill, the Hungarian Government seeks to change the definition of 'sex' on all official identity documents to 'sex assigned at birth'. If this was to pass, there would be a complete legal erasure of transgender individuals in Hungary. This is in addition to years of discriminatory policies against migrants and asylum seekers.

In Brazil, the President Jair Bolsonaro has a persistent record of carrying out hard-right policies that aim to undermine the role of marginalised groups in Brazilian society and threaten academic freedom. These include withdrawing material support for Brazil's black and indigenous populations, withdrawing state funding for sociology degrees, removing LGBT content from school materials and the partial privatization of Brazilian universities.

The Palestinian people have existed under a decades-old military occupation, with this cumulating recently in a pledge by the Israeli government to annex parts of the West Bank (illegal under international law). A policy of disablement is dominant in the Israeli military, who have also resorted to threatening to out LGBT Palestinians who don't inform on their communities. Gaza has become an open air prison, with inadequate access to safe food and water and a population where 75% of the population are under 25. The occupation is a major barrier to access to education, with mobility restricted and students suffering under an occupation that inhibits freedom of movement, the occupation of Palestine is among the top priorities of the Palestinian student movement.

### **What could the solutions be?**

Quite simply, we need to re-ignite the spark of student internationalism and solidarity through a programme of political education, mobilisation, network building and twinning:

- Students should be more aware of the struggles of students and marginalised groups in Hungary, Brazil and Palestine, and work to support and build campaigns
- Students societies focusing on international solidarity should increase in number and be developed.
- Students should feel more of an obligation to undertake international solidarity work in and/or outside of their education institutions.
- Students in relevant countries should know that UK students aim to stand in solidarity with them

#### *Ideas for implementation*

- NUS and students' union should have twinning agreements with student organisations in Hungary, Brazil and Palestine focusing on knowledge exchange and educating students.
- Endorse ILGA Europe and Transgender Europe's #drop33 campaign<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ilga-europe.org/resources/news/latest-news/drop33-europes-two-largest-networks-lgbt-and-transgender-organisations>