

Oxford UCU Branch Motion

Passed at General Meeting on 7th November 2023

Oxford Divest Borders UCU Motion

This branch notes:

- That the UK Government regularly contracts out border control implementation to private companies, which profit off the criminalisation of mobility and asylum seeking. These include companies that contract out detention (such as [Mitie](#)), deportation (such as [Airbus](#)), and surveillance (such as [Accenture](#)).
- That the border industry historically and frequently engages in violent and morally abhorrent actions and tactics that infringe on human rights and cause needless suffering, for the sake of profit;¹
- These violent actions are more often than not aimed at racial and religious minority migrants, who suffer doubly: not only being displaced and having to flee in dangerous circumstances from their native lands, but also facing illegal and unjust punishments when attempting to arrive in the UK or Europe;
- That Oxford University UCU is an affiliate member of the Coalition to Keep Campsfield Closed, which opposes the UK Governments' announcement in June 2023 to reopen an immigration removal centre in Oxford - to be run for profit.
- That a motion was passed at the 2022 UCU Congress calling on the GS to write to MPs calling them to publicly condemn anti-migrant measures, including the outsourcing of asylum processing as it is conducive to cultural xenophobia and is harmful to all migrants living and working in the UK.²
- That two years after the launch of the national Divest Borders campaign, four UK Universities have already passed ethical investment policy to divest and screen out border industry companies from their investment portfolios.
- That Oxford University currently has an ethical investment policy which already screens out fossil fuel investments and investments in arms companies.³

This branch believes:

- The criminalisation of migration is both harmful and futile, especially in the face of growing international instability, and given the accelerating pace of climate breakdown.

¹<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/feb/11/woman-cleared-of-assaulting-yarls-wood-guards-during-struggle>

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/rats-sewage-cockroaches-uks-failed-26426687>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/oct/28/eu-accused-of-abandoning-migrants-to-the-sea-with-shift-to-drone-surveillance>

² [UCU - Equality motions](#)

³<https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation/finance-and-funding/oxfords-endowment/oxford-university-investment-policy-statement>

- Both generally as a civil society actor, and in its capacity as representative of migrant members, UCU has a role to play in defending migrant and refugee rights.
- Migrants are welcome in the UK.
- That the Union is currently in a fight against the neoliberalisation of the University as an institution; the same process that allows these private companies to profit from the suffering caused by border violence against people on the move.
- That as a University of Sanctuary, Oxford University's investments should reflect commitments to social justice and the respect of basic human rights.

Therefore, this branch resolves:

- To demand the University publicly commit to divest from the border industry. In practical terms, this means to:
 - freeze any new investments in the border industry⁴;
 - regarding current holdings and shares in the industry, commit to divesting from them within 2 years, or the shortest period contractually permitted;
 - publicly commit to an ethical investment policy that excludes the border industry, and make this policy readily accessible to staff and students;
- To pursue the demand for Divestment through the Congregation and all relevant Representatives, including sending a letter to the Ethical Investments Representations Review Subcommittee and the Investment Committee, outlining the outcomes of this motion;
- To regularly follow up and advocate for this cause in all relevant forums, for example Governing Body meetings;
- To demand regular updates on the status of Divestment before and after it is passed;
- To support students, staff and other members of the community affected by border violence in whichever ways they want to be supported and are possible by this branch;

⁴ People & Planet's [Border Divestment List](#) identifies the 70 companies engaged in reprehensible activities including border security and control, deportation, detention and border surveillance.