Divest Borders Student Union Motion

### This Student Union notes:

1. 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 [Serco](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/feb/11/woman-cleared-of-assaulting-yarls-wood-guards-during-struggle)), deportation (such as [Airbus](https://www.airbus.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2019-03-airbus-presents-its-security-capabilities-at-the-world-border)), and surveillance (such as [Accenture](https://www.accenture.com/gb-en/insight-new-digital-border-agency)).
2. 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]](#footnote-1);
3. 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;
4. Despite numerous investigations, calls for reform, and attempts to improve the functioning of these private border security corporations, the industry has taken little to no action towards changing their practices. They have made it clear that the industry is beyond salvaging.
5. As research has shown, shareholder activism rarely succeeds in accomplishing change, and other tactics such as divestment are far more effective in achieving ethical goals. As a movement, divestment can help in revoking the social licence that these corporations have to perpetuate human rights abuses, and pave the way towards wider political, economical, and structural change;

### This Student Union believes:

1. The University of **[X]** owes it to its students, teachers and staff to engage in ethical investments, and not profit from the exploitation of oppressed peoples and infringement of human rights. Furthermore, as a diverse body, the university must recognise that many of its own members are or have been deeply affected by the border violence that it currently profits from;
2. The university can and should act as a leader, and follow its morals with actions by engaging with the Divest Borders campaign. Even if no investments in the border industry currently exist, a public commitment not to invest in the future will have a wide-ranging impact in showing students that the university is concerned with ethical investments and in empowering global migrant justice movements;

### Therefore, this Student Union resolves:

1. To **[delete as appropriate]**:
   1. **[if the university has investments]** adopt the People & Planet Divest Borders campaign and demand that our university:
      * 1. exclude the border industry from their investment portfolio;
        2. introduce a publicly accessible ethical investment policy excluding the border industry;
        3. commit to, and fully divest from the border industry within 3 years.

**OR**

* 1. **[if the university does not have investments]** adopt the People & Planet Divest Borders campaign and demand that our university:
     + 1. sign the Pledge Against Border Violence to publicly affirm that they do not hold investments in the border industry, as well as committing to never invest in them in the future;
       2. introduce a publicly accessible ethical investment policy excluding the border industry.

1. To mandate the relevant full time officer(s) to support students to lead, and put resources towards, a high-profile divestment campaign on campus, including - where relevant - the dissemination of information about the university’s investment practices.
2. To regularly follow up and advocate for this cause in all relevant forums, for example Governing Body and Investment Committee meetings;
3. To demand regular updates on the status of divestment before and after it is passed;
4. 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 Student Union;

Notes for Proposing Motion

1. This is a *template* commonly used in universities. Different Student Unions/Councils might have different styles. Make sure to check the style used in recent successful motions, and to make edits where required to ensure the motion is tailored to your university context. If you need help, please feel free to email [divestborders@peopleandplanet.org](mailto:divestborders@peopleandplanet.org)
2. A lot of Student Unions/Councils will have a chair/secretary who is responsible for the smooth running of meetings. Try to speak to them beforehand for more specific advice on how meetings work.
3. Note that motions will likely need to be sponsored by a number of Student Union/Council members, or a (larger) number of students in order to be bought for debate. Think about which of these options is better for you.
4. Whichever option you choose, it’s a good idea to reach out to Student Officers/Councillors beforehand. Think about which ones you have relationships with, and whose remit might cover what the motion is talking about. Welcome input from them about how to get it passed.
5. Whichever option you choose, it’s also a good idea to show that there’s a broad coalition of groups behind you where possible, and that you have deep and diverse support.
6. It’s a good idea to prepare properly. Have a think about who is going to say what when you’re debating it, and think about any questions that might come up and how you will respond.
7. It’s probably a good idea to tip off the student press and your allied societies that you’re trying to pass the motion.
8. If the motion *does* get passed, this means you have a commitment on paper from your Student Union/Council to support you. Make sure you follow through on it! Start looping relevant officers into your campaign, and make sure you make full use of their support and institutional access. Alert the student press to build momentum from this win.
9. If the motion *doesn’t* pass, don’t be disheartened. You can still work with the Union/Council to amend the motion into something that will pass. Make a note of any Officers who were supportive of the motion, and reach out to them to start involving them in the campaign.

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> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)