

people & planet



**DIVEST**  
**BORDERS**  
**ACTION GUIDE**



**WE ARE A STUDENT MOVEMENT DEMANDING THAT OUR UNIVERSITIES BREAK TIES WITH THE BRUTAL BORDER REGIME INFLECTING VIOLENCE ON MIGRATING PEOPLE IN THE UK AND ACROSS THE GLOBE.**

The combination of climate crises and decades of military and economic intervention in the Global South is driving tens of millions from their homes. Meanwhile, the Border Industry swells with the profits of this devastation, snatching up contracts to provide the infrastructure and technologies which violently control the movement of people.

Now more than ever is time to fight back and build a world without borders where all have the right to move, stay and thrive.

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# WHAT IS BORDER VIOLENCE?

People subjected to **negligence and abuse in detention centres** with horrific conditions. **Deportation flights ripping families apart** and dropping people into unfamiliar and often life-threatening environments. Children drowning as lifeboats are forced to turn back. **It is impossible to ignore the breadth, depth and injustice of the harm caused by the UK's border regime.** We use the overarching term '**border violence**' to encapsulate the full range of physical and emotional violence inflicted upon people as a result of attempts to delineate who does and does not belong in certain spaces. Particularly, we refer to the injustices inherent in nation states' efforts to control access to 'their' territories and the resources within. This process of bordering is **inherently racialised and classed**, systematically restricting the opportunities and freedoms of those racialised as non-white and those deemed less economically productive. This regime necessitates violence in a number of arenas, namely:

**BORDER SECURITY AND CONTROL**

**DEPORTATION**

**DETENTION**

**BORDER SURVEILLANCE**

**ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICES**



# Border Security and Control

*The creation and maintenance of the physical infrastructure of security at borders, as well as the provision of the personnel who staff them.*

**Physical abuse, sexual violence and killings** are commonplace both at borders and along the routes people are forced to use to reach and cross them. The **militarisation of border guards**<sup>1</sup> (alongside violent rhetoric and a lack of accountability) creates conditions where state agents are encouraged to inflict suffering to prevent crossings.

The injustices in this area include the widespread development and **use of 'less-lethal' weapons such as 'sound cannons'**<sup>2</sup>, which are widely criticised by human rights observers<sup>3</sup>.

Furthermore, at camps such as Calais, border force guards routinely confiscate and destroy the food, shelter and possessions of migrants<sup>4</sup> with the express intention of breaking their spirit.

In addition, countless people are endangered by deliberate negligence, with **'pushback'** operations<sup>5</sup> by patrol boats intent on preventing migrants from reaching ashore. This has caused thousands of deaths in the Mediterranean and the Channel<sup>6</sup>.

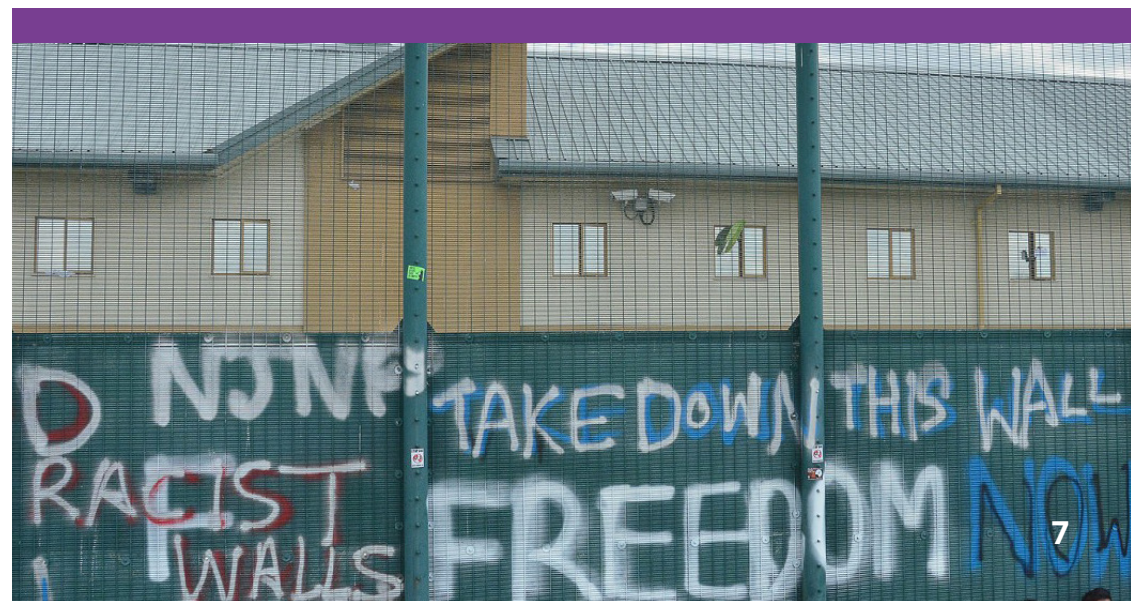
The **removal of safe routes**<sup>7</sup> pushes more and more people into the hands of predatory people traffickers, where they are at **risk of abuse, torture and slavery**.

# Detention

*The deprivation of liberty for migration-related reasons and the provision of all infrastructure and services required to undertake this.*

The detention system in the UK has one of the most horrific records in Europe, with centres facing countless allegations of **abuse**<sup>8</sup>, **sexual violence**<sup>9</sup>, **negligence**<sup>10</sup>, **denial of medical treatment**<sup>11</sup>, **racial abuse**<sup>12</sup> and **failure to investigate unlawful deaths**<sup>13</sup>. The Home Office have recently been accommodating people seeking asylum on the Bibby Stockholm barge, a floating prison wholly unfit for human habitation.

However, while much resistance to these systems focuses on instances in which detention is indefinite, unlawful and/or squalid, it is very important to recognise that **the process (and threat) of detention is inherently violent**<sup>16</sup> and that there are no circumstances in which it is just that a person be detained on the basis of an arbitrary characteristic such as place of birth.

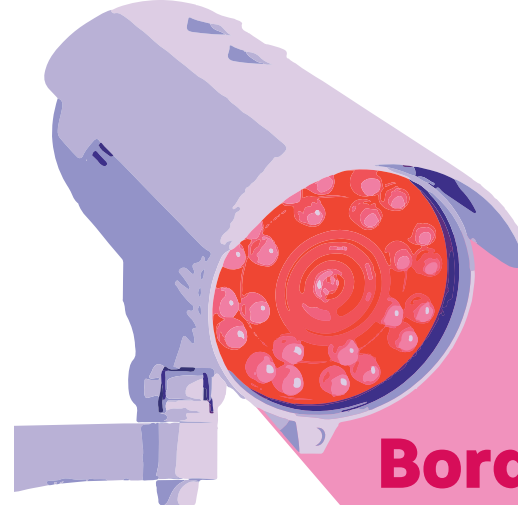


# Deportation

*The (usually involuntary) removal of people from a country, often by force, due to the determination that they have 'no right' to be there.*

Although the rate at which the Home Office has been deporting people has been falling since a high in 2012, **the numbers<sup>17</sup> are still shockingly high.** The UK tries to remove anyone that they can, often targeting people only convicted of petty crimes<sup>18</sup> (if any) and who, in many cases, have no memory of living anywhere but the UK<sup>19</sup>, where their entire family and life are located. **This rips families apart<sup>20</sup> and often leaves children in precarious situations<sup>21</sup>.** In many cases, the deportees are jettisoned into environments that present a clear danger to their safety<sup>22</sup> without any

support or protection. **Countless people are rushed through legal systems<sup>23</sup> and deported in the middle of the night<sup>24</sup>,** relying on the idea that appeals are much more difficult and less often successful when made from abroad<sup>25</sup>. Recently, the so-called "Rwanda Plan"<sup>26</sup> has truly exposed the government's disregard for human life, **trampling upon the rights of those seeking safety** by attempting to send them to the other side of the world. It is important to note that this scheme would be despicable no matter the destination.

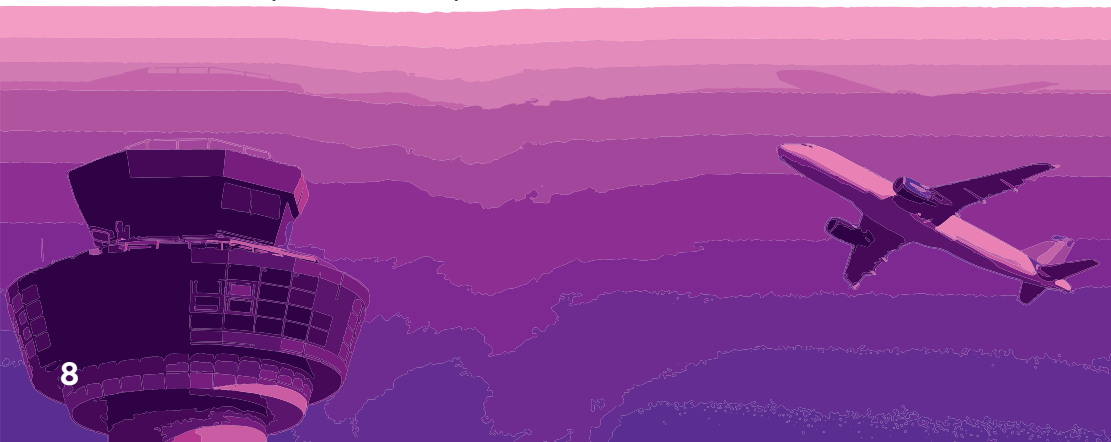


# Border Surveillance

*The use of newer technologies such as AI, phone hacking and biometric scanners to gather and store the data of migrating people.*

The increased determination to control the borders and tabloid scare stories about 'lost' migrants<sup>27</sup> has led to a marked rise in the demand for and development of advanced surveillance systems. These include **advanced AI<sup>28</sup>, facial recognition<sup>29</sup>, biometrics<sup>30</sup>, drone observations<sup>31</sup> and invasive offender management software<sup>32</sup>.** These technologies are not only deployed at the border to prevent crossings but also within states in order **to track the movement, association and activity of migrants.** People are forced to yield an increasing amount

of personal data, including biometric information, with little-to-no explanation of how it will be used or their legal rights. Migrants' phones are taken<sup>33</sup> from them on arrival and often kept for months while they are searched. This is under the auspices of preventing people trafficking but leaves vulnerable people unable to access social and/or safety networks. The storage, use and sharing of this data raise **extensive human rights concerns<sup>34</sup> relating to privacy, civil liberties, racial profiling and the misuse of collected information<sup>35</sup>.**



# HOW IS IT ENACTED?

## (1) Government

**Border violence results from the decisions and actions of two main groups of actors.**

The government, specifically the Home Office, creates **harmful, racist immigration policies** in order to further institutionalise discrimination. Ever since the non-white subjects of the empire began arriving in large numbers post-war, successive British governments have been steadily adding and amending immigration legislation in order to make it more and more difficult for racialised people to live and work in Britain. **The current 'hostile environment' policies explicitly aim to deter migration by making the lives and journeys of those without 'proper' documentation as dangerous and precarious as possible.** This cold-hearted strategy is combined with a

drive to make securing and maintaining this documentation as difficult and profitable as possible by imposing **prohibitive fees and deliberately confusing processes.** The 'Illegal Migration Bill'<sup>36</sup> introduced in 2023 has been widely condemned<sup>37</sup> for making it essentially impossible to claim asylum in the UK and removing all rights from anyone who tries to cross the channel. Even those people who are able to secure the necessary documentation are faced with **increasingly high barriers to full citizenship rights and rising costs to accessing services such as the NHS.** Moreover, the narrative created by the UK government<sup>38</sup> against people who move has been a **breeding ground for racist discourses targeting refugees and asylum seekers**<sup>39</sup>.

## (2) Border Industry

Although governments are responsible for creating immigration policy, they are outsourcing the implementation of most of this violence to the private sector. Thus, **the border regime relies on a vast network of hundreds of companies,** many of which are household names. **These firms provide and develop the technologies and labour required to make the hostile environment a reality, as well as playing a significant role in promoting these policies** and the alarmist, racist, xenophobic narratives which feed into them. Some of the companies most deeply entangled in the UK Border Regime include Accenture,

Palantir, Serco, Mitie and Thales. While border industry-related activities are a core activity for some of these companies, many roles are carried out by large multifunctional firms for whom border violence is just a slice of their operations. For example, Amazon, Microsoft and Motorola all lend their expertise in information and imaging technology towards surveilling migrants. While these services and technologies may only represent a minuscule fraction of the operations of these companies, **the resulting violence is significant and cannot be ignored.**



There are many **similarities between the border industry and the cases of the arms industry and the prison industry**, which are more clearly perceived and understood by the general public due to decades of global resistance to both. A number of companies (such as Serco) are major players across all of these industries. As well as this, these three industries all share similarities in their nature as networks of disparate

companies, think tanks and politicians, which **all reinforce and support one another in service of mutually profiting from suffering.**



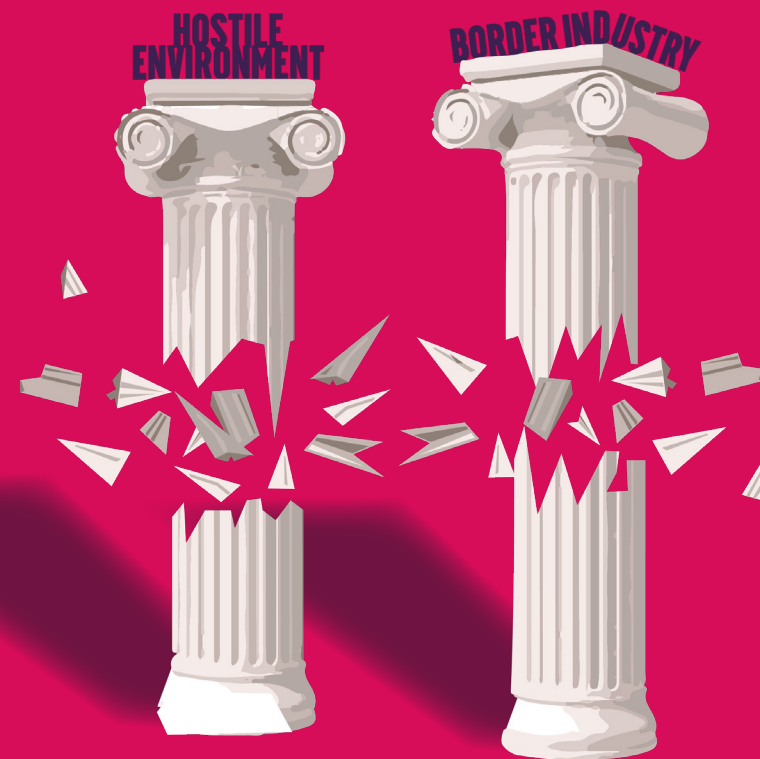
### **(3) Revolving Doors**

Just as with the prison industrial complex, the **close relationship engendered between politicians and the offending companies creates a dangerous feedback loop.** Government creates the opportunity for profit by creating aggressive migration policies which need to be enforced. Private companies jump at this opportunity to line their pockets and the resulting profits drive further investment

and innovation in cruelty. These private companies then use this relationship to influence state policy themselves, lobbying government for more aggressive migration policies and more opportunities to profit. **Many of these companies stand to profit from both the sales of arms and the oppression of those fleeing which creates an incentive to stoke spiralling violence.**

## **HOW DO WE RESIST IT?**

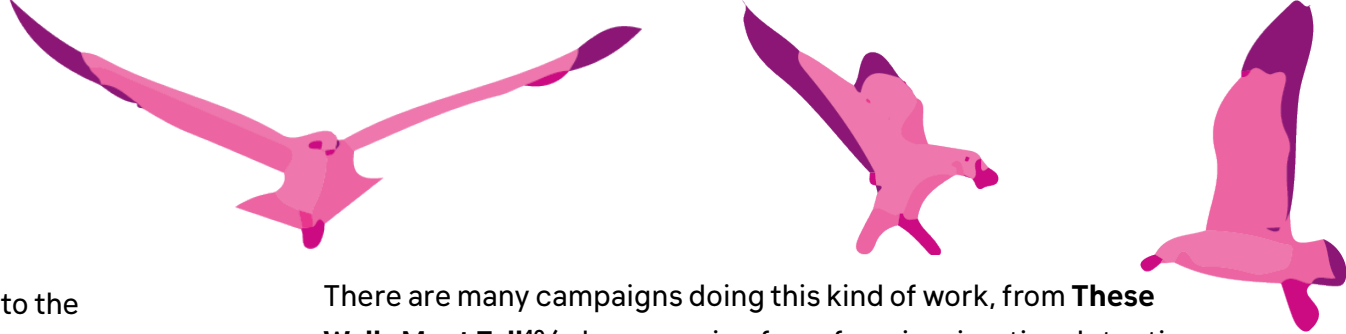
Frontline communities have been resisting border violence in a plethora of ways, and there are a number of strategies we can take.



**BOTH OF THESE PILLARS CAN BE SHAKEN AND PRESSURE ON BOTH IS CRUCIAL TO A WORLD FREE OF BORDER VIOLENCE**

# Resist the Hostile Environment

One method is to resist, challenge and push for alternatives to the hostile environment policies of the Home Office. While this may appear to be an insurmountable task at the onset due to the border regime's vast array of interconnected features, **some links in the chain are particularly vulnerable to pressure from below**. The system cannot function without the collaboration and consent of the public, and by refusing to participate, we can weaken its reach. **We believe that that this kind of resistance, alongside other forms of lobbying and protest, can force the government to abandon its hostile environment policies.**



There are many campaigns doing this kind of work, from **These Walls Must Fall**<sup>40</sup> (who campaign for reform in migration detention policy) to the **Patients Not Passports**<sup>41</sup> movement which supports doctors in refusing to comply with Home Office requirements. **Unis Resist Border Controls (URBC)**<sup>42</sup> campaign to kick the hostile environment out of universities, advancing a comprehensive manifesto with demands ranging from an end to the surveillance of students through to free education and free movement.

## Dismantle the Border Industry

Another method is to reduce the willingness and ability of the companies to continue enacting border violence on behalf of the Home Office. The enactment of border violence relies on the technology, labour and cruelty of a network of private companies who make up the Border Industry. **Without the eager cooperation of these companies, the Home Office's policies would not be able to translate into violence so easily.**

We cannot demolish the companies, **but we can destroy their reputations and disrupt their operations**. There are a number of groups already doing vital work in this area such as No to Hassockfield<sup>43</sup>, Privacy international<sup>44</sup> and the Anti-Raids Network<sup>45</sup>. **Divest Borders contributes to this aim and acts in solidarity with these campaigns and those affected by border violence.**



# The Divest Borders Campaign

## Our Vision

### NO BORDERS

Our vision is a world free from borders, where arbitrary characteristics have no impact on opportunities and outcomes. Although it may seem that bordering is deeply entrenched in the way we navigate, perceive and interact with the world, the border regime and the nation states as we know them today are relatively new concepts.

We can take steps in the direction of a no-borders world while we are still building our imaginations of this ideal. That very process will develop public consciousness to the extent that new scenarios enter the popular imagination. By focusing on the features we

## DIVEST BORDERS

know will be inherent to such an ideal and fighting to secure them now, we can approach a point from which the finer details become clearer. So, it is necessary in the medium term to focus the struggle on achieving a state that we may regard as sub-optimal.

This does not make our activism any less radical as long as we ensure that we do not view such goals as ends in themselves but rather as staging posts on the journey to a no-borders world where all are free to move, stay and thrive.

## NO VIOLENCE

One feature which we can be sure will be absent from any vision of justice is **the violence enacted upon (often racialised) people in order to control, monitor and prevent their movement.** We can therefore begin by doing all that we can to bring about an end to the forms of border violence described above. It is also true that in fighting for a world free of border violence, the **intrinsic connections between**

**violence and bordering will be made stark.** When we come to a popular understanding that the latter cannot exist without the former, we can hope to see a simultaneous development in conversations about a world free from both. Thus, **if we are able to bring about a world free from border violence, the onward path to a world free from borders will be much shorter and clearer.**



## Campaign Aims

**TO PLAY OUR ROLE IN BRINGING ABOUT THIS VISION OF JUSTICE, WE DEMAND THAT UNIVERSITIES DIVEST FROM ALL COMPANIES COMPLICIT IN BORDER VIOLENCE**

This means the withdrawal of all investments from any companies engaged in or supporting violence relating to detention, deportation, surveillance or the use of force in border control.

Alongside this (and for any institutions without existing investments in border violence) we demand all universities commit to abstaining from any future investments in the Border Industry and set up exclusion criteria to compel such behaviour. **Therefore, we are calling upon all UK universities:**

- 1. TO ADOPT A PUBLICLY AVAILABLE ETHICAL INVESTMENT POLICY WHICH EXCLUDES BORDER INDUSTRY COMPANIES**
- 2. TO EXCLUDE BORDER INDUSTRY COMPANIES FROM THEIR INVESTMENTS**
- 3. TO FULLY DIVEST FROM CURRENT INVESTMENTS IN BORDER COMPANIES WITHIN 3 YEARS**

## Our Targets

Our **Border Industry Divestment List**<sup>46</sup>, which we update annually, details the full list of companies universities must divest from, while the accompanying methodology<sup>47</sup> explains the reasoning behind our decisions. In short, the list aims to capture all publicly traded companies engaged in (or providing significant support to) any of the activities involved in any of the categories of border violence discussed above.

These are some of the key targets, with clear records of violence exemplary of the industry:

### **COMPANY: AIRBUS SE**

### **CATEGORY: BORDER SECURITY AND CONTROL**

Airbus is a European company designing and manufacturing civilian and military aerospace products.

Airbus secured a €50 Million contract to provide The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (aka Frontex) with aerial surveillance drones<sup>48</sup> for the purpose of **tracking the movement of migrants in the Mediterranean**. This is another dangerous step in the militarisation of borders and opens up many new opportunities for abuses<sup>49</sup>. The use of such drones is increasingly central to bordering strategies.

Airbus have also earned €2 billion providing **border surveillance systems to Saudi Arabia, as well as selling border patrol helicopters to Libya and other mediterranean states**. The company supplied equipment for Operations Sophia, Poseidon and Triton, which involved illegal 'push-back' manoeuvres<sup>50</sup> and have been criticised for **blocking asylum seekers from claiming protection**.

## COMPANY: BRITISH AIRWAYS

### CATEGORY: DEPORTATION

British Airways (owned by International Consolidated Airlines Group S.A.) is the UK's flag carrier and largest international airline, flying to more than 160 destinations around the world. It has also long been a key partner of the Home Office<sup>51</sup>, **profiting from the UK's inhumane border regime by carrying out forced deportations** and facilitating the violence inherent in this process and its aftermath. In 2010 their role became more publicised in the wake of the murder of Jimmy Mubenga<sup>52</sup>, who was killed on BA flight 77 by G4S employees attempting to restrain him and deport him to Angola. However, the 'escorts' faced no consequences, BA continued to deport people and in June 2023, Solidarity Detainee

Support reported that a person was injected and tranquilised so as to be forcibly removed from the UK on a British Airways flight<sup>53</sup>.

**Complicity in this kind of violence is a choice**, and while BA claims they are legally required to assist the government, many airlines have already terminated their relationships with the Home Office following public pressure from activists. **Campaigns from Lesbians and Gays Support the Migrants<sup>54</sup> and StopTUI<sup>55</sup> forced both Virgin and TUI respectively to cease involvement** in involuntary removals, proving that companies can make a decision not to participate in this brutal industry.

## COMPANY: ACCENTURE

### CATEGORY: BORDER SURVEILLANCE

Accenture<sup>56</sup> is one of the world's largest multinational firms, making \$43.2 billion revenue in 2019 from IT and consultancy services. Within these operations, Accenture has been instrumental in the creation and maintenance of the EU's 'virtual border walls' which seek to **track and control the movement of migrants across the continent**.

**The company has played a significant role in lobbying European governments for more hawkish immigration policy and more heavily militarised borders<sup>57</sup>.**

Accenture propagated the threat that terrorists could be posing as refugees in order to create demands for their biometric security systems, which harvest, store and share the biometric data of migrants. The presence of these systems makes it much more likely

that migrants will be detained and deported, and thus lessens the number of safe migration routes. Accenture has also been responsible for the **training needs of border agencies across Europe including in Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey**, where increasing violence has been observed from militarised border security forces. The company was also involved in the creation of Aadhar in India, the world's largest biometric registration system. This system has been the subject of significant criticism<sup>58</sup>, with concerns that it will **create an underclass of undocumented Indians and migrants now unable to access essential services**.

## COMPANY: MITIE PLC

### CATEGORY: DETENTION

Mitie Group PLC<sup>59</sup> is an outsourcing company that provides various "facilities management" contract services to both corporations and government, ranging from cleaning to consultancy. They have over 200 offices in the UK and are listed on the FTSE250. In 2020 Mitie finalised their acquisition of Interserve, a facilities management company with 44,000 employees. The combined organisation is the largest of its kind in the UK, employing over 77,000 people, with yearly revenue for 2022 hitting around £4 Billion.

Mitie has seen its revenues double as a result of the pandemic. **Their profits come from underpaying workers, cutting health and safety, and capitalising on the racist, violent demonisation of refugees and asylum seekers<sup>60</sup>.**

In 2017, Mitie were awarded a £525 million "escorting" contract by the Home Office<sup>61</sup>. Under this contract, **Mitie runs two large Immigration**

**Removal Centres and around 30 smaller holding facilities.** These IRCs are essentially prisons, with the UK being the only country in Europe wherein people can be detained indefinitely<sup>62</sup>. Mitie's management of these facilities has been exposed as **breaching even the Home Office's low standards for sanitation, health and safety<sup>63</sup>.** There have been severe outbreaks of COVID-19 in Mitie's detention centres<sup>64</sup> and Mitie is one of several companies (along with G4s, Serco and GEO) that came under fire for employing detainees to carry out work at a rate of £1/ hour<sup>65</sup>.

As well as IRCs, **Mitie also provides security, vehicles and logistics for the Home Office to carry out violent deportation flights<sup>66</sup>.** Mitie are currently under investigation for failing to investigate racism within their immigration staff<sup>67</sup>, and are frequently making headlines for similar incidents<sup>68</sup>.

## COMPANY: AMAZON

### CATEGORY: ADVISORY AND SUPPORT

Amazon is the world's largest online retailer and cloud storage provider. In addition to innumerable accusations of fuelling the climate crisis, complicity in Israeli apartheid, tax avoidance, horrendous working conditions and union busting, **the company also provides crucial digital infrastructure facilitating the functioning of the border industry<sup>69</sup>.** In addition to hosting most US immigration enforcement systems<sup>70</sup> and lobbying aggressively for policy to make this more profitable, the company has also developed its own facial recognition system<sup>71</sup> which it has pitched to ICE.

Furthermore, they are also a minority owner of Air Transport Services Group (ATSG) whose passenger arm Omni Air International is the sole provider of 'high-risk' deportation flights for ICE. Therefore, **they also directly profit from the use of violence<sup>72</sup> against those who 'fail to**



# Why Universities? Why Divestment?

UK universities are deeply entangled in the Border Industry, with their investments, research and partnerships forming a crucial link in the production and legitimation of border violence. While the scales of sums in question are not so significant that taking away university investments will cripple the industry financially, it is a vital step in the right direction. Importantly, universities occupy a respected role in a society which widely regards them as beacons of

forward thinking. While university investment in the Border Industry can be seen as explicit approval of such cruelty, a commitment from such institutions to divest from these practices would be a huge statement delegitimising the industry and stigmatising those who participate in and profit from it. While many of the private companies which enact the cruelty of the UK border regime don't care what you think, universities are vulnerable to pressure from below.



Universities depend on positive publicity and are very keen to prevent negative headlines which could repel prospective students, staff or investments. **We have to make sure universities know that any financial benefits of their investments in the Border Industry will be heavily outweighed by the reputational damage they will suffer.**

This divestment approach has been extremely successful in the climate justice movement, with over 100 universities

**committing to divest from fossil fuels in the last decade**<sup>73</sup>. There is also strong precedence in the arena of migrant justice. In 2015, grassroots campaigners in Australia launched a divestment campaign targeting the state's offshore immigration detention centres. They created such a stigma around involvement with the abuses happening at such sites that no private companies were willing to bid for the government contracts to run them leading to the closure of several sites.



# Divestment and Global Crises

**Universities aren't isolated bubbles** - they are connected to and shaped by the same systems that foster global injustice. Similarly, they are also shaped by workers' and students' struggles to reclaim universities as spaces of learning and curiosity, and of knowledge creation that benefits society. To organise for climate and social justice at our universities, we have to understand the battleground we are fighting on.

Following COVID-19, our universities were thrown into financial crisis. As in other spheres of society, global and local crises (such as COVID-19 and rising costs of living) show whom those with power are willing to de-prioritise and ignore. We have seen university staff on temporary and outsourced contracts

being made redundant and laid off. We have also seen students struggling to pay rent, and migrant students with No Recourse to Public Funds struggling to buy food while being further saddled with lifelong debt to pay off tuition fees. Under the Hostile Environment, migrant students and staff continue being monitored and surveilled by their own universities, who are acting as over-compliant border guards to fulfil the Home Office's requirements. All this while we watch our departments continue cosyng up with fossil fuels, arms, and border industry corporations. **Now more than ever, the chronic lack of public funding in education and universities' reliance on international students' fees and corporate money is becoming impossible to ignore.**



Our fight for migrant justice at universities has never been only about investments. Across campaigns, **students have been demanding institutions that don't serve the interests of corporations but those of our society.** This fight is now more important than ever. We find ourselves struggling within universities that invest in genocide, use the expertise to develop technologies of oppression, and violently repress their own students and staff for speaking out. Through over 10 years of marketisation, our institutions have become well-oiled machines that graduate bankers, engineers or researchers that move on to work for cruel, unjust industries. And what's even more worrying is that so many people seem to have accepted it and cannot imagine how it could be different.

The neoliberal university has stolen our collective capacity to imagine a better future. That is why divestment on campus is fundamental in the context of global crises, such as an impending economic collapse, a looming climate breakdown and the increase of securitisation and militarisation of borders. **We need to fight for universities that foster our collective creativity to respond to these crises.** We need liberated institutions that allow us the space and freedom to imagine, and build, a more just society. Divestment from the border industry is one piece of that puzzle. **In solidarity with the struggles of staff, migrants, anti-arms, anti-racist and BDS campaigners at universities, we can together work towards truly liberated, revolutionary futures.**

# Divestment and Solidarity

When we call for divestment, we stand in solidarity with those most deeply affected by the UK's border regime. What do we mean by this?

**WHENEVER WE CAMPAIGN, WE SHOULD REMEMBER THAT THERE ARE AFFECTED COMMUNITIES ALREADY LEADING THE RESISTANCE TO THOSE COMPANIES ON THE FRONTLINES**

These are the families resisting deportation, detainees fighting to highlight the cruelty they suffer, the vulnerable people fleeing crises created by the West, and all those whose livelihoods and lifestyles are shaped by their immigration status. **For these communities this struggle is often a matter of life and death.** We take our inspiration from them, and they direct our tone, messaging and actions.

**True solidarity is about locating your own position(s) within an exploitative global system, and utilising it to challenge that same structure.**

For example, from our position as campaigners in the Global North (where most of these violent policies, technologies and companies emanate from) we can influence decision-makers more effectively than many of those on the frontlines. Furthermore, the privileges afforded by a British passport allow owners to take actions which may be too risky for those with insecure immigration status. **It is our job to listen to those most affected by the border regime, and to use our privileges to support their struggles in any way that they require.**



# Campaign Tactics

## 1. Build your Group

### 1. BUILD A TEAM

All good campaigns start with a strong team. Get together with your friends and start recruiting a variety of people to campaign with you. You can put out a call on social media for people to join you, get in touch with like-minded societies, or ask your SU officers to put you in touch with other interested students. Try to get a space at freshers' fairs and see if you can borrow a minute or two at the end of lectures or events to shout out the campaign.



### 2. HOLD A SOCIAL

Socials are a great way for people to get to know each other - what you want to do is up to you, but **make sure it's fun and accessible!** Think about how you can make the atmosphere as welcoming as possible, and plan some ice-breakers to start building relationships and comfort.

### 3. HOLD YOUR FIRST MEETING

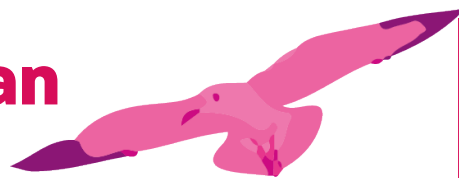
Arrange an open meeting to talk about starting the Divest Borders campaign. You can create an online event to publicise it widely, and ask supportive societies to share it with their members. Make sure that you end the meeting by giving **clear next steps on how to get involved**: schedule your next meeting, take contact info and distribute any action points. For more resources on building a cohesive campaigning group, check out our [Movement Building Action Guide](#)<sup>74</sup>!





## 2. Research and Plan

### PART I: RESEARCHING YOUR UNIVERSITY



The campaign you run will depend on your university - they're all different. An understanding of the context at your university is invaluable when it comes to planning your campaign.

In order to know what success will look like for your group, and how to go about achieving it, there are a number of questions you should try to answer. These can be grouped into three areas:

#### GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND PROCEDURES

1. What is the decision-making structure of the university?
2. How much power does the Student Union have? Are there any more supportive officers? Are there any other ways students can be heard?
3. Can you identify any groups or individuals who may be influential supporters? Which societies can you form coalitions with? Are there any potential opponents?

#### INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY AND PUBLIC IMAGE

1. How has the uni responded to past divestment efforts? (South Africa, Fossil Fuels, Israeli apartheid)? Check their Fossil Free Scorecard for a start<sup>75</sup>!
2. How do the institution and decision-makers try to create/maintain a good public image? Can statements they have made or causes they have supported be used to support your arguments?
3. Are any of the student papers more supportive than others?

#### INSTITUTIONAL INVESTMENTS

1. Who has decision-making power over investments? Which bodies would need to sign-off on a divestment commitment, and how do they make their decisions?
2. What Border Industry companies are the institutions invested in, both directly through stocks and indirectly via funds? Is there any stand-out posterboy? Do they have any partnerships or other connections?
3. Does the university have an ethical investment policy? Do they already exclude any industries?



UNIVERSITY  
LEAGUE 2023/24

#### RESEARCH FINDS:

**72% OF UK  
UNIVERSITIES  
HAVE DIVESTED FROM  
FOSSIL FUELS**

## YOUR UNIVERSITY'S INVESTMENTS

No matter what companies your uni is invested in, **the campaign aims are the same - to secure a policy commitment to exclude the Border Industry from investments.** However, depending on the situation there are some nuances to consider:

### MY UNI HAS NO INVESTMENTS...

If your institution doesn't have any investments in the Border Industry (or any investments at all), that's great! But without a policy stating that the institution will never invest in the Border Industry, it could start doing so at any time. You should campaign for the university to introduce an ethical investment policy and/or add an exclusion to an existing investment policy stating that it will never invest in Border Industry companies. You should also get the university to sign the **Divest Borders Declaration** confirming their Border Industry free status.

### MY UNI IS ONLY INVESTED IN ADVISORY AND SUPPORT COMPANIES...

Many universities are invested in big tech companies such as Amazon, Google & Microsoft. If these are your uni's only Border Industry investments, you may need to do a bit more work to convince friends and management alike. As it's less immediately obvious how these companies are involved in the Border Industry, you will need to be prepared to demonstrate their complicity in detail. **Research, raise awareness and make your case!**

If the uni is being really difficult, you can offer a **partial divestment** where they commit not to invest in detention, deportation or border security and control. This can be a useful campaign tool to get a foot in the door, but remember - this is a short-term compromise on the road to full divestment!

**We regularly investigate universities' investments through Freedom of Information requests - get in touch and we'll let you know what we know!**

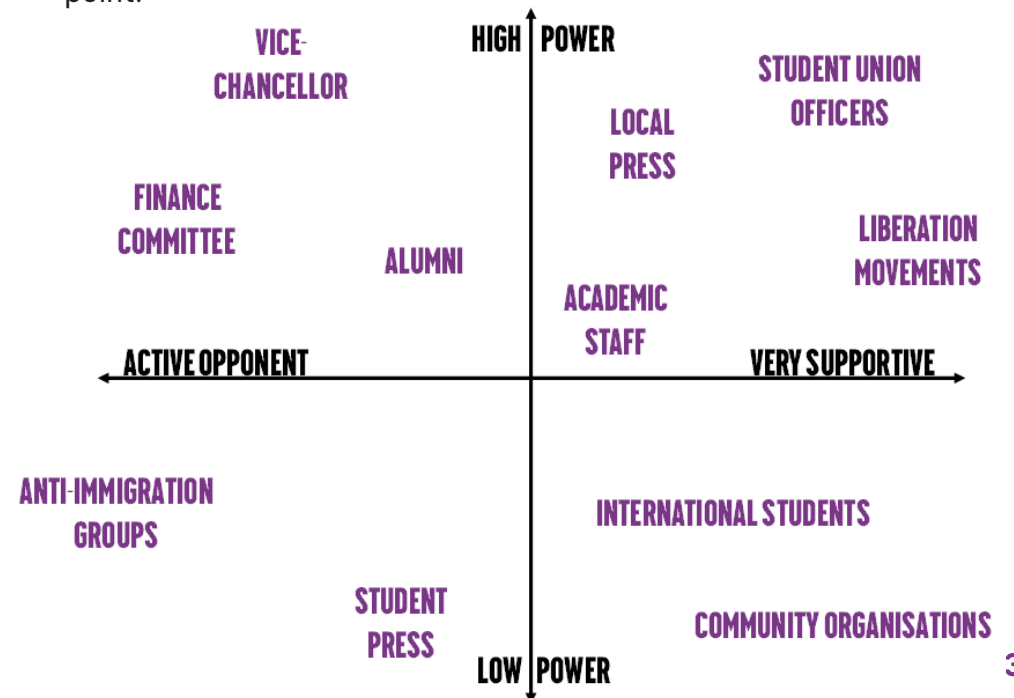
3.2. When deciding on the placement of its investments, the University strives to adhere to its stated values. As such it does not knowingly invest (including through collective funds), in companies or activities which are considered to be unethical, potentially detrimental to health (this includes alcohol, tobacco and gambling), threaten community and international stability, or contribute to the maintenance of poverty, abuse of children or other groups. This includes:

- All fossil fuel companies.
- All arms companies.
- All companies complicit in the violation of international law.
- **To screen out Border Industry companies**

*Cardiff Metropolitan University Ethical Investment Policy 2022 Update*

## PART II: POWER MAPPING

To make your campaign as strong as possible it's important to know who you will have to convince. Based on the answers to the questions on page 31, map out all the key decision-makers who might be involved along the path to divestment. Use this example as a starting point!



## POWER-MAPPING TIPS

- You should be clear about who you're targeting with each move you make and why.
- As you try to identify the expected level of support/opposition to your campaign, also look for any weaknesses you may be able to exploit. For example, if the VC sits on the board of a human rights organisation to boost their public image, use this to highlight their hypocrisy.
- **You don't need to convince everyone!** Building a strong coalition with other groups on campus may be a better use of your energy than trying to convince a particularly stubborn VC.
- Overall, you should be aiming to **move as many people as possible to the top right corner**, where they are empowered and supportive. When this quadrant is busy, campaigns tend to win!

## PART III: CAMPAIGN PLAN

Based on the context at your institution, as revealed in the power map, you should then put together a **campaign plan**. This is a living document that you can collectively use to organise your thoughts and set clear benchmarks that will help keep your campaign on track.

**Think about who you want to convince, when and how you'll do it, and what order you'll need to do things.** Try to put together a vague timeline and use this in regular meetings to check on your progress towards the milestones you've set for yourselves.

**Be flexible** - if you've hit unexpected obstacles you should feel comfortable to shift things further into the future rather than rush to keep up. Similarly, if you're building momentum quickly and you know how to use it, don't feel like you need to wait to move to the next stage!

## 3. Build Support

**At the moment, the idea of the Border Industry isn't something which is widely understood, and the abuses and cruelty which accompany it are largely hidden.** One of the most important things that we can do is to raise awareness of the scale and nature of these injustices so as to inspire more widespread resistance.

### GET SOCIAL

With so much organising happening digitally in recent years, having a social media presence has become **fundamental**. Create Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts for your campaign so that you can regularly update your supporters with news and calls to action. Engage with your audience, answer questions and spread your vision! Get in touch if you'd like a Social Media Workshop for your group.

### PETITION/OPEN LETTER

Petitions are a fantastic way for new supporters to contribute to the campaign! You can use our petition tool<sup>76</sup> to start one. If you do, you will also be able to create a mailing list and email the signatories about campaign updates and further actions they can take. Open letters<sup>77</sup> are another useful tool to publicise the campaign's reasoning and demands while allowing **alumni, academics** and **societies** to show their support. Think about how you will amplify these on social media - it is important to reach outside your followers to gain wider support!

### FILM SCREENING OR TALK

See if you can find a documentary or film which speaks to issues of migrant justice and host a screening with a discussion afterwards. Invite speakers from other groups running campaigns with similar themes to come and share learnings from their experiences. Get in touch with us if you need any help with this.

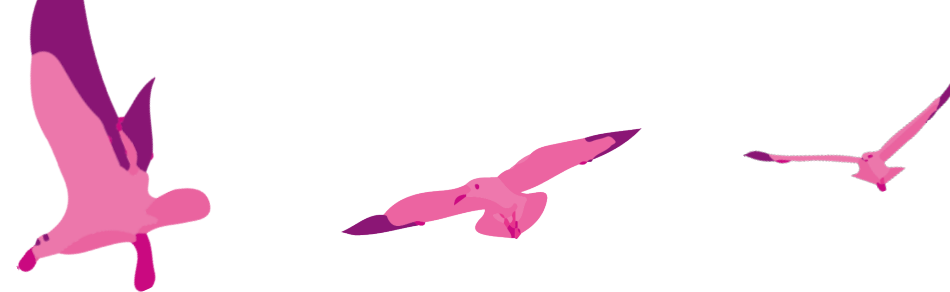
## BUILD COALITIONS AND PRACTICE SOLIDARITY

Solidarity does not exist only in theory - **it demands action**. Solidarity is the practice of using our time, position, skills and resources to struggle alongside other people for our shared goal - our **collective liberation**. It is the recognition that **no one is free until we are all free - that our struggles are all interconnected**.

**It's likely that on your campus and in your area, you won't be the only group fighting for justice.** There could be students demanding the university divest from other areas, such as fossil fuels, arms or Israeli Apartheid. Other groups could be supporting the day-to-day struggles of migrants through mutual aid networks or legal support. There may already be a group targeting a particular Border Industry company, such as the Mitie Must Fall campaign<sup>78</sup>. There are also unions, who exist to represent students and

staff in their struggles against institutions. **It is crucial that we act in solidarity with these struggles, and form coalitions with like-minded groups wherever possible.**

Most recently, in the context of the genocide in Palestine, we have seen many students mobilising in protest encampments on their campuses in order to hold their universities to account for their complicity in Israeli apartheid. There are clear parallels between the genocidal Israeli occupation and the global border regime. The same companies that supply weapons and surveillance technologies to Israel are also often involved in the border industry too. So, forming divestment coalition groups and establishing joint targets with BDS campaigners on campus is a great way to do solidarity work in the university context!



You might have been campaigning for a while, whilst others might just be starting out. Offer to share what you have learned, but don't be patronising! You could organise skillshares, or help with a task such as drafting a press release. Make sure you don't assume people don't know how to do something, always ask what support you can provide. If you have time, join their campaign group and organise with them. Make sure you take care of yourself though - don't get over-worked! It is also important to remember that experiences of protests and confrontation can vary greatly based on a person's identity. If you are less susceptible to such prejudicial treatment and feel comfortable to do so, consider offering your services to be most visible - you might be needed! It is important that the voices of those affected remain centred

**OFFER YOUR SKILLS,  
TIME AND BODY**

Is another campaign holding an event? Show up and show your support! Have they just launched a petition? Sign it, and share it on your social media! Are they holding an action? Participate if you can, and ask if there's any ways that you can support them behind the scenes! It is important that you don't expect anything in return, and that you don't show up at these events just to push your own agenda, however important you feel it might be. In supporting another group's fight, you will inspire others to show solidarity with yours and other causes.

**SHOW UP, WITHOUT  
EXPECTING ANYTHING  
IN RETURN**

## 4. Negotiate and Escalate

### THE INSIDE TRACK

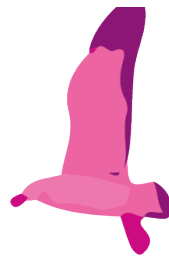
At some point you will likely need to engage in 'inside track' campaigning, **making demands of the institution's administration via the established channels**. Once you've demonstrated support for the campaign and begun to turn up the heat on management, consult your power map to **identify the staff responsible for the institution's investments and request a meeting** to present your case for why divestment is beneficial and necessary.

This must be a serious and reasoned argument, and you should prepare responses for likely counter-arguments. Be sure to do all stages of this as a group to **ensure a collective voice is represented and everybody feels supported**. Think about the skills in your group and distribute roles based on each of your strengths. Publicise the fact that you've got the meeting on social media beforehand, and what you will be trying to get out of it. Update people afterwards too, as this all brings a greater level of **accountability**.

During the meeting, **be clear on your aims and agenda** and don't be afraid to repeatedly steer the conversation back to these core issues.

These meetings can be very stressful even if they go well, so be sure to grab a coffee together straight afterwards to talk it through and compare notes.

If the uni agrees to anything, **send a follow up email** to confirm this and attach dates to it.



### THE OUTSIDE TRACK

If you think that the uni is not listening to you, wasting your time or engaging in bad faith, **don't be afraid to take bold action**. Often the things students fear will anger or alienate institution management are exactly what is required to make the university take the campaign seriously.

Despite the **heightened need for care in the wake of the pandemic and changing protest legislation**, mass in-person actions such as marches and occupations will always be a powerful demonstration of popular support for the cause. Lockdown forced us to be more creative in our campaigning, and digital actions such as disrupting online open days or tweetstorms targeting university management can still be incredibly effective and accessible tactics moving forward. Most recently, Divest Borders did a subvertising Day of Action, wherein students put up bus stop-size posters around their campuses to subvert classic open day images by highlighting their universities' complicity in border violence.

Think about reaching out to alumni - a reduction in donations to the university will always be noticed. If your university has famous graduates, statements of support from them could be very powerful.

**Get the press involved!** Even if it's just local and student media, good coverage can really put pressure on university management.

## 5. Win

When your institution is about to make a decision on your Divest Borders campaign, **you need to be ready for any outcome**. This means preparing your press releases, but also having plans in place for celebration or escalation actions if required.

### YOU'VE WON! WHAT NOW?

#### CELEBRATE

Have a party to celebrate all the amazing things that you've achieved! **It's vital to mark successes and share them with the wider movement**, whether digitally or in person.

#### PUBLICISE

If it's a victory, there is a lot of work to be done to publicise your win and get the story out to the press. **You'll need to appoint media spokespeople, write press releases and be ready with photos**. Contact People & Planet if you need help with any of this!

#### SHARE

Make sure you share your story on social media and beyond. **Write blogs, give interviews, share resources, and run workshops to let others learn from your success** and what you've done well. Big successes are inspirational and your story will encourage others to start campaigns or take theirs up a notch, so **it's really important that you spread the word!**

## NOT QUITE THERE?

The border industry is vast, and the level and form of involvement vary from company to company. As a result, there may be situations in which universities are willing to divest from some of our targets but not all.

We are able to offer a **partial divestment** option for universities willing to cut ties with all companies involved in detention, deportation or border security and control. While this is still a cause for celebration, **you will need to keep pushing for full divestment**. This is the time to shine a light on the injustices of the border surveillance industry and the complicity of big tech firms in providing the digital infrastructure propping up the violence.

Don't be shy - you won't lose the gains you've made by keeping the campaign going. **Keeping up the pressure means your university is more likely to stick to its word and take your demands seriously.**



## 6. Follow Through

**Make sure that the university delivers on its commitments.** There have been numerous occasions in the past when universities have tried to take advantage of the high turnover of student organisers to squirm out of their promises. Make sure this doesn't happen to your campaign! **Check out our accountability guide<sup>79</sup> for some tips** - it focuses on our Fossil Free campaign but most of the learnings are transferable.

### 1. TAKE ACTION

When the university committed to divestment, there should have been dates attached to the promises with clear means of tracking the progress towards them. If you see that the university is falling short of these targets, **it may be time to take action to remind them of their duties.** Publicise management's own words and draw wide attention to their hypocrisy.

### 2. CAMPAIGN HANDOVER

While campaigners graduate and leave, it doesn't mean the campaign has to stop, or that the university will no longer face scrutiny for its actions. **Before you leave, pass on all the important information about the campaign to those who are staying on.** This includes both tactical advice and what the university has committed to, as well as relevant contacts and passwords to access all campaign files. Cambridge Zero Carbon society has written an amazing blog post<sup>80</sup> about this and **we have a really useful handover checklist<sup>81</sup> to help you keep track of the information.**

## RESOURCES

For a full library of resources for student campaigners, visit our website!

Planning is everything - this tactic star will help you prepare great actions!



## MEDIA

As a campaigner, your job is to make journalists' jobs as easy as possible so they're most likely to run your story. **Research journalists at different publications** who have run similar stories recently, and get in touch with them before an action to feed them advance details. It's important to send **press releases**<sup>82</sup> whenever you do an action and at other strategic moments. They should contain everything needed to write an article: the who, what, where, when and why of the story. Try to include photos and further reading if possible.

You may want to use local and student media to run comment articles breaking down the aims of the Divest Borders campaign and why people should get involved.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

As with any campaigning tool, it's **important to develop a strategy for how you will use social media** to advance your campaign. Think about which platforms you will use, what audiences you want to reach, and the type of messages you think will appeal to different groups. Photos and videos always have a better reach than articles or just written posts - keep this in mind when planning, and try to have a variety of content to post each week.

Once you have a strategy, **formulate a publicity plan** for every event or action you are going to do. Assign action points so that everyone is clear on whose responsibility it is to create graphics, write copy and schedule posts. **Be sure to rotate roles frequently** so that everyone in the group can gain confidence and skills.

**YOU HAVE TO ACT AS IF IT WERE POSSIBLE TO RADICALLY CHANGE THE WORLD AND YOU HAVE TO DO IT ALL THE TIME - ANGELA DAVIS**

### CAMPAIGN MATERIALS

- Introduction to Power and Privilege<sup>83</sup>
- Introduction to Digital Organising<sup>84</sup>
- Introduction to Movement Building<sup>74</sup>
- Template DB SU Motion<sup>85</sup>

### CAMPAIGN IDENTITY

We can provide you with logos, fonts and colour codes to use in your designs!

### CAMPAIGN TRAINING

We offer interactive trainings on most skills and topics mentioned in this guide. Get in touch and we can set up an online session or come to campus!

### FURTHER READING

- Shado - What is the Border Industry<sup>86</sup>
- Harsha Walia - Undoing Border Imperialism<sup>87</sup>
- Gracie Mae Bradley & Luke De Noronha - Against Borders: The Case for Abolition<sup>88</sup>
- Vice - How the \$68 Billion Border Surveillance Industrial Complex Affects Us All<sup>89</sup>
- The Ferret - Critics condemn the UK's increasingly privatised immigration industry<sup>90</sup>
- TNI Report - Financing Border Wars<sup>91</sup>
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## **people & planet**

Divest Borders is a student movement fighting to get our universities to divest from companies that profit from the border regime and from the human rights abuses inflicted on migrants at borders in the UK and across the globe.



This guide gives you all the knowledge you need to get involved and fight for migrant justice - join the movement!

**Please do get in contact with People & Planet for support** - we can answer any questions you have, put you in contact with other groups and publicise your progress to the wider network!

✉ [divestborders@peopleandplanet.org](mailto:divestborders@peopleandplanet.org)

f [facebook.com/peopleandplanet](https://facebook.com/peopleandplanet)

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