

TGSA Extraordinary Board Meeting
Tuesday, May 7, 2024 @ 4:30 PM
Via Zoom
Minutes

Present: Maureen O., Susan M., Sileen P. Rosemary B., Bohdan H., David R.,
Christine W. S., Marina G., Hyelim Y., Matteo C., Christian C-S.

Regrets: Li-Wei L., Sam A.,

1. **Prayer/Territorial Acknowledgment.** The prayer was offered by Maureen, following which she read the Territorial Acknowledgement.

2. **Discussion re: response to the request of the students asking that TGSA prepare a statement directed to the U of T in regard to the letter “*TO THE GOVERNING ELECT MEMBERS OF THE TORONTO SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY’S TORONTO GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION*”** (letter attached to these minutes). Maureen read the relevant portions of the request, and asked that everyone feel free to express their thoughts in regard to this request.

An open discussion took place. In general the board was supportive of the idea of the University increasing financial transparency and divesting itself of investments which support war and aggression in any way, shape, or form, especially in conflicts which are clearly genocidal in result or intention.

The matter of the previous letter which the TGSA prepared and sent to the TST was raised and reviewed. The context of the earlier letter is important, in that it did not receive a response from the TST, nor did TST offer any further response on its own initiative.

A point was raised to the effect that since this first TGSA letter to the TST, the situation has changed insofar as a) at the current time the Gaza conflict has been described by some as a genocide; and b) it appears that students’ tuition funds might be used to invest in companies who manufacture arms and munitions.

A question was raised and information was presented in regard to the concreteness of the demands being made by the drafters of the abovementioned letter regarding investments and/or other concrete means in which the U of T is supporting genocide. It was noted that the letter clearly refers to all manner of genocidal acts of aggression, and all agreed that this issue must be approached in a wholistic manner, i.e., the divesting and transparency in regard to ANY investments of U of T – especially student tuition - money which is in any way supporting any type of illegal, sinful, and genocidal actions or activities anywhere in the world, against any nation or peoples.

It was also noted that in the context of the Gaza conflict there have been atrocities on both sides, and that it is important in every case to take a broad view not ignoring the criminal actions committed by all sides involved.

It was noted that if TGSA does prepare a response it would be good to frame it in terms of supporting dialogue between the U of T and the students involved in the protest, as this is one of the requests made in the letter.

Concerns were also raised about statements made in the name of a particular college or student cohort, as such statements could lead to conflict rather than reconciliation, while on the contrary side a statement which is so broad as to have no “teeth” would be both unhelpful and unnecessary.

A response dealing strictly with transparency in regard to finances is not problematic, but “political issues,” if not addressed with nuance and tact, could lead to deeper conflict within the student body, which is not desirable. It was again emphasized that any response must clearly note the fact that TGSA is in sympathy with and supportive of all human beings anywhere on the earth who are suffering due to unjust aggression, colonial subjection, terrorism, economic, religious, or cultural oppression, and to recognize that many similar and even worse atrocities are being committed in other parts of the world.

It was suggested that those who drafted the letter be approached in order to let them know what our concerns are and dialogue with them prior to crafting a statement from TGSA.

It was generally agreed that a response would be appropriate, and also agreed that this process should not be rushed, but that the necessary time should be taken to craft the best possible statement.

It was agreed that Matteo will write a response to the students telling them that we had a meeting to discuss the issue and will be putting out a statement. He will also draft a statement on behalf of TGSA asking the U of T for dialogue with students and transparency on financial investment. Both of these responses will be approved by the TGSA Board.

3. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 PM.

Minutes prepared by Bohdan Hladio

TO THE GOVERNING ELECT MEMBERS OF THE TORONTO SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY'S TORONTO GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION

We are writing to request that the TGSA issue a statement in support of the student-led actions demanding that the University of Toronto be transparent about — and divest from — its direct and indirect investment in companies arming or profiting from the genocide of Palestinian peoples. As you may or may not be aware, at 3am on May 2nd a group of U of T students joined the wave of student movements across the continent and began to peacefully occupy the green space of the King's College Circle on the St. George campus. They have renamed it "The People's Circle for Palestine." You will have likely received the institutional response in your email inboxes, none of which address the issue of profiting from genocide. At this time, we are not asking the TGSA to find consensus on religious or political beliefs regarding the history or ongoing events in Palestine/Israel. While it remains an extremely worthwhile and important task for a theological school association to understand the need to speak back against Christian Zionism, its own connections to settler colonial violence, and to honour the voices and experiences of Palestinian Christian theologians, we are aware that such work will not happen over night. We are instead asking the TGSA to issue a statement that says the university should honour the demands for financial transparency and not fund genocide anywhere, anytime, in any place, against any people. We would be happy to dialogue further about this request and would also offer support to draft something if helpful. We look forward to receiving your timely response.

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