

EGM 2024

RESOLUTION 3

Proposed by 66 SoA members



On a proposed SoA statement on Gaza

Resolution 3 was proposed by 66 members of the Society of Authors.

The text that follows includes a statement from the SoA Management Committee (approved by a majority vote) in blue followed by the text of the resolution proposed by SoA members.

The SoA position on Resolution 3

The issue of whether the Society of Authors (SoA) should comment on the horrific situation in Israel and Gaza, and the deeply distressing and escalating humanitarian crisis, has been discussed carefully, at length and revisited several times by the SoA's board (Management Committee) since 7 October 2023, with the decision each time that the SoA should not make a statement. This was also discussed by the membership at the SoA's AGM on 16 November 2023, with several of the signatories taking part in the discussion.

The Management Committee opposes Resolution 3 and recommends that members vote against it for the reasons set out below.

However, we wish to make the following clear:

We agree with the members putting forward the resolution that:

- All authors should be free to express their views without facing direct or indirect censorship, including boycott or cancellation of authors or publishers because of their views, ethnicities, religions or ties to other countries.
- All authors and publishing workers have the right to freedom of expression.

We fully support the right of our 12,500+ members to express their myriad views freely and we respect their freedom to bear individual witness to world events.

At a time of heated debate and polarised opinions we would also like to remind members of [our approach to Dignity and Respect](#). We endeavour to ensure that everyone in our industry is treated with dignity and respect so that individuals are supported and can speak out. **As part of this we ask our members to be mindful of the views of others and we condemn abuse and the incitement of hatred of any kind, including anti- Jewish and anti- Muslim racism and hate speech.**

In 2023, the SoA staff and board of directors (Management Committee) conducted an extensive and careful review of our communications approach – specifically what we comment on and how we comment.

The reworked policies summarised below are the result of that review and can be downloaded from the [How We Communicate page](#) on the SoA website.

These updated policies amend and supersede past policy, and our practice in some areas may be different from what we have done in the past.

'We do not comment on areas outside our remit in order to protect the right to freedom of expression of our 12,500 individual members.'

As an organisation, we try to ensure that we comment only on issues that are within our mission, and where we are informed and can make a positive difference. We do not comment on areas outside our remit in

EGM 2024

RESOLUTION 3

Proposed by 66 SoA members



order to protect the right to freedom of expression of individual members, but we will always support individual members privately on any issue in relation to the business of being an author.

We do not deny any members the right to their individual views.

As individuals, we are all devastated by the loss of life, destruction and continuing conflict in Israel/Gaza. We all hope that a solution can be found very soon, and that peace can be brokered in the region. We appreciate the level of concern, anger, frustration and helplessness felt by our members in the face of such events.

While we mourn the shocking and tragic deaths of journalists, poets, and other media workers, these issues are more appropriately a matter for organisations such as the NUJ and PEN with a view to their wider roles. We would urge concerned members who have not done so already, to add their voices to support the campaigning of these organisations.

We would also encourage any members who suffer individual targeting because of their views or stance to contact us directly.

As a trade union, our remit and mission is to support members in relation to the business of authorship. The SoA's board has therefore taken a decision that the SoA should not publish a statement and, in doing so, incorporate our individual members' voices into an assumed consensus via a collective statement on issues that are outside of our remit and expertise and where we have no mandate from our membership.

Accordingly, the Management Committee opposes this Resolution.

Resolution 3

We invite the membership to consider and vote on the following statement and actions:

At the time of writing, 14th March, 2024, more than 31,000 Palestinians have been killed in the Israeli government's offensive in the occupied Gaza Strip since October 7th, 2023.¹ This includes at least 13,000 children, with more than 73,000 injured, and 1.7 million displaced.² To date, at least 15 United Nations Special Rapporteurs and 21 members of United Nations Working Groups have warned of 'grave violations committed by Israel against Palestinians' and a 'genocide in the making' in Gaza.³ On 26th January, 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) found it plausible that Israel's attacks on Gaza could amount to genocide, issuing six provisional measures "to prevent genocidal acts, including preventing and punishing incitement to genocide, ensuring aid and services reach Palestinians under siege in Gaza, and preserving evidence of crimes committed in Gaza."⁴ On 26th February 2024, Human Rights Watch stated that Israel has failed to comply with at least one measure in the legally binding order from the ICJ.⁵ Furthermore, on 5th March 2024, at least 8 UN Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups have condemned Israel for intentionally starving the

¹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory | [Home Page \(ochaopt.org\)](https://ochaopt.org)

² <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-humanitarian-impact-14-march-2024-1500> and <https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aie/2024/israel-war-on-gaza-10000-children-killed>

³ Gaza: UN experts call on international community to prevent genocide against the Palestinian people | [OHCHR](https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/gaza-un-experts-call-prevent-genocide-against-palestinian-people)

⁴ Gaza: ICJ ruling offers hope for protection of civilians enduring apocalyptic conditions, say UN experts | [OHCHR](https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/gaza-icj-ruling-offers-hope-protection-civilians-enduring-apocalyptic-conditions)

⁵ Israel Not Complying with World Court Order in Genocide Case | [Human Rights Watch](https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/03/05/israel-not-complying-world-court-order-genocide)

EGM 2024

RESOLUTION 3

Proposed by 66 SoA members



Palestinian people in Gaza, including shooting, shelling and targeting civilians seeking humanitarian aid.⁶

The SoA condemns indiscriminate targeting of civilians and cultural infrastructure including churches, mosques, hospitals, schools, libraries, and universities. The SoA calls for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and for Israel to uphold its obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

At least 95 journalists and media workers have been killed as a consequence of Israeli military action since October 7th, 2023. This constitutes more than 72% of all worldwide media deaths for 2023. These include Mohamed Fayez Abu Matar, Saeed al-Taweel, Mohammed Sobh, Hisham Alnwajha, Mohammad Al-Salhi, Mohammad Jarghoun, Ahmed Shehab, Husam Mubarak, Mohammad Balousha, Issam Bhar, Salam Mema, Assaad Shamlakh, Ibrahim Mohammad Lafi, Khalil Abu Aathra, Sameeh Al-Nady, Abdulhadi Habib, Yousef Maher Dawas, and Roshdi Sarraj.⁷

Writers at risk of harassment and obstruction while evacuating Gaza is of serious concern. This includes the case of Palestinian poet Mosab Abu Toha, a recipient of the American Book Award, who was arrested, imprisoned and beaten when crossing a checkpoint at the Rafah border, after receiving clearance for safe passage.

The SoA believes that the relative inertia of UK publishing at a time when Palestinian authors and publishing workers continue to suffer is not acceptable. The SoA is also deeply concerned about the unprecedented levels of censorship and retribution that authors and publishing workers in the UK are facing in response to their solidarity with the Palestinian people.

The SoA must join the global union movement, including our sister movements in the UK, in calling for peace and affirm support for publishing workers calling for justice and accountability.

The SoA believes:

- 1. Targeting journalists is a breach of international law.⁸*
- 2. A blockade of water, fuel, medical supplies, electricity and food amounts to collective punishment.⁹*
- 3. All civilian lives should be mourned, and nobody should face retribution or retaliation for expressing solidarity and grief when civilians are killed.*
- 4. All authors should be free to express support of the Palestinian people without facing direct or indirect censorship.*
- 5. All authors and publishing workers have the right to freedom of expression.*

The SoA resolves:

- 1. To issue a public statement in support of a permanent ceasefire in Gaza.*
- 2. To issue a public statement condemning the targeting of Palestinian writers and journalists by the Israeli government.*

⁶ [UN experts condemn 'flour massacre', urge Israel to end campaign of starvation in Gaza](#)

⁷ Journalist casualties in the Israel-Gaza war - Committee to Protect Journalists | [cpi.org](#)

⁸ How does international humanitarian law protect journalists in armed-conflict situations? | [ICRC](#)

⁹ Israel/Gaza Hostilities Take Horrific Toll on Children | [Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](#)

EGM 2024

RESOLUTION 3

Proposed by 66 SoA members



3. *To issue a public statement affirming the rights of those affected to receive justice for those killed by the Israeli government.*
4. *To issue a public statement affirming support for publishing workers facing direct or indirect censorship for their solidarity with the Palestinian people.*
5. *To issue a public statement condemning the destruction of Palestinian cultural infrastructure by the Israeli government, including but not limited to, libraries and universities.*

Proposed by:

Sunny Singh
Jess Brough
Harry Josephine Giles
Peter R Bush
Rosalind Harvey
Clare Gaunt
Titilayo Farukuoye
Yara Rodrigues Fowler
Katherine Van de Vate
Katharine Halls
Rob Myatt
Jessica Gaitan Johannesson
Shara Atashi
Rahul Bery
Nikesh Shukla
David Colmer
Sarah Bernstein
Suyin Haynes
Andrés N Ordorica
Polly Barton
Megan Nolan
Katie Goh

Anna Gunin
Alycia Pirmohamed
Struan Murray
Nariman Youssef
Charlène Busalli
Anna Bentley
Trista Selous
Sophie Lewis
Marta Cisa
Donald Nicholson Smith
Anam Zafar
Zoe Perry
Lucy North
Michaela Pschierer-Barnfather
So Mayer
Sally Huband
Guy Gunaratne
Harry Gallon
Shze-Hui Tjoa
Tom Jeffreys
Aoife Lyall
Katalina Watt

Anbara Salam
Anthony (Vahni) Capildeo
Mohamed Sayed Tonsy Mahmoud
Ginny Tapley Takemori
Ruth Ahmedzai Kemp
Leri Price
Nichola Smalley
Marilyn Booth
Richard Coombes
Mayada Ibrahim
Nicky Harman
Victor Meadowcroft
Julia Sanches
Robin Moger
Anahit Behrooz
Mikaela Loach
Thomas Eagle
Alim Kheraj
Marchelle Farrell
Jeda Lewis
Eris Young

24 Bedford Row, London WC1R 4EH
T 020 3880 2230
E info@societyofauthors.org
www.societyofauthors.org

Chair Vanessa Fox O'Loughlin
Chief Executive Nicola Solomon

The Society of Authors is a company registered in England No. 00019993 and an independent trade union