

## Avon Pension Fund Committee – 26<sup>th</sup> September 2025

### Statement from Beth Cleeter

I am speaking today as a member of the public whose deferred wages are in the Avon Pension Fund. I do not consent to my deferred wages being invested into the companies of weapons manufacturers. I am concerned that only one in five members of the Avon Pension fund will get the chance to have their say on such an important issue. I also object to the wording of the survey as it is bias towards continuing with the status quo which is perpetuating war around the globe, genocide in Gaza and environmental destruction. Members may not be fully informed of what they are agreeing to when reading “investments in aerospace and defence”. Perhaps a more accurate description of the companies we are investing in could be used in the survey question to members, for example “do you agree to your wages being invested into the companies of war profiteers?”

For anyone who loves the members of their family, minimal imagination is required to know how much you wouldn't want your mother to die a slow, terrifying death, crushed under rubble in the dark. Or to find out that your newborn granddaughter had been found decomposed in her incubator after a missile strike on the hospital. You wouldn't want to see your bereft nephew searching through the rubble of his grandparents home, trying to find a trace of them to feel closer. Or know that your daughter had died in agonising pain from unsurvivable burns, without anaesthetic. These are not imaginary scenarios, they are the horrors inflicted upon thousands of Palestinian's in Gaza for 2 years. The genocide that Israel is committing against Palestinian's is ensured by the continual supply of weapons from Western countries, such as the UK and it's allies. Companies such as BAE Systems, General dynamics, Boeing, Northrop Grumman and others profit from the unconscionable suffering of our brothers and sisters across the world and have undue influence on our politicians which leads to more economic insecurity and inequality. It is not defence.

I can not see how investment into these companies aligns with any ethical responsibility towards people or planet. I also object to the APF's policy of engaging with companies and sectors known to be involved in war crimes, human rights violations and environmental destruction rather than complete exclusion and divestment. If that policy worked we would not be witnessing a genocide, and there would be far fewer wars going on. Divestment works. Companies have redirected their production away from weaponry after losing contracts. Please offer our members an alternative that they can vote for. There are more ethical ways for them to get returns on their wages and to support the local economy. Other countries and municipalities have divested their portfolios away from the economy of murder and so can we. Please use your authority to lead to something better.