

An open letter to the candidates for the election of the new BASW Chair

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) has a democratic deficit and it is vital for the future of the association that this is put right as soon as possible.

It was heartening therefore to see the hustings that took place on 16 July, and we encourage BASW members to watch it if they haven't already - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2CNTsiAn4&t=2s>

All three candidates spoke of BASW being a member-led organisation - in principle if not in practice - and of the need for the BASW leadership to be open, honest and transparent with the membership. The actions of whoever is elected need to match these words.

Fran Fuller called for a return to in person AGMs and other meetings - this is one of the bottom lines for a democratic member-led association.

Cath Gormally said that minutes of Council and other meetings should be available and easily accessible to members - this should also be a bottom line.

Priscilla Kurewa spoke of BASW being a beacon when she was a student in Zimbabwe, for fighting apartheid in South Africa. BASW was a vibrant, vocal and radical association, which we want it to be again. Fighting apartheid should be a bottom line too.

There are many issues where BASW needs to speak out today. We are BASW members in Social Workers for a Free Palestine, and it is important to us that we highlight this one.

In 2023, a motion was proposed to the BASW AGM, calling on BASW to condemn Israeli apartheid. A BASW Council amendment watered this down, replacing that call with a commitment that BASW's International Committee would review the reports by human rights organisations that concluded that Israel is practising apartheid against the Palestinian people, and that BASW would then publish a position paper about this for its members. This amended motion was passed by BASW's members.

Three years later, these two parts of the motion have yet to be actioned. The previous Chief Executive accepted this, and informed members at the Policy General Meeting in May 2025 that the position paper would be published in two months. It has yet to be seen.

The present BASW leadership has consistently ignored our communications about this motion not being actioned.

On 19 July 2024, the International Court of Justice found that Israel is practising apartheid against the Palestinian people.

BASW has ceased to be a democratic organisation, and the incoming Chair will need to address this urgently.

We would also welcome a guarantee from prospective BASW Chairs that they will uphold the values of the social work profession, promote human rights, and lead BASW to be an anti-apartheid association.

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