Motion: Avoidance of Microsoft products due to alleged Microsoft complicity in genocide

The branch notes:

1) In a recently published report by the UN's Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied insice 1967, a range of companies are revealed to be 'sustaining Israel's settler-colonial project of displacement and replacement of the Palestinians in the occupied territory'. The report, entitled 'From Economy Occupation to Economy of Genocide' lists **Microsoft** among commercial entities 'sustaining the illegal Israeli occupation and its ongoing genocidal campaign in Gaza'. The Microsoft-specific passages in the report include the following:

> *Microsoft has been integrating its systems and civilian tech across the Israeli military since 2003, while acquiring Israeli cybersecurity and surveillance start-ups.*

> *41. Microsoft, Alphabet and Amazon grant Israel virtually government-wide access to their cloud and artificial intelligence technologies, enhancing data processing, decision-making and surveillance and analysis capacities. In October 2023, when the Israeli internal military cloud overloaded, Microsoft, with its Azure platform, and the Project Nimbus consortium stepped in with critical cloud and artificial intelligence infrastructure. Their Israel-located servers ensure data sovereignty and a shield from accountability, under favourable contracts offering minimal restrictions or oversight. In July 2024, an Israeli colonel described cloud tech as a weapon in every sense of the word, citing these companies.*

Microsoft also appears on the list of consumer boycott priority targets of the BDS movement, which explains:

> Microsoft is perhaps the most complicit tech company in Israel's illegal apartheid regime and ongoing genocide against 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza. Microsoft's complicity in Israel's apartheid and genocide is well documented, exposing its strong ties to the Israeli military, its collaboration with Israeli government ministries, and its involvement in the Israeli prison system, which is notorious for systematic torture and abuse of Palestinians. Microsoft *knowingly* provides Israel with technology, including artificial intelligence (AI), that is deployed to facilitate grave human rights violations, war crimes, crimes against humanity (including apartheid), as well as genocide.

2) The branch currently relies on Microsoft products extensively for organising, in particular on Microsoft Teams which serves the branch as a communication and organising tool, an information repository and a video-conferencing tool for holding branch meetings. Executive Committee members and branch officers as well as ordinary members may also rely on other Microsoft products like Office 365. Given 1), this can represent a conflict of conscience for members and is potentially at odds with UCU positions and policy at branch and UK level.

3) It is (by design of the manufacturer) not easy stop reliance on certain software applications and because of this, any transition needs to be well-planned to ensure the branch is well able to carry out its organising and other functions in the interests of members, including the maintenance of accessibility functions such as captioning during meetings.

4) Moving away from the use of Microsoft products is likely to have additional benefits in terms of increased data protection and an improved firewall to university systems. Viable alternatives are available (e.g. Zoom or https://jitsy.org for video conferencing, https://pumble.com or https://ksuite.infomaniak.com for messaging/discussion, data storage as well as video conferencing).

The branch resolves:

1) To look into the feasibility of phasing out Microsoft Teams over the next 12 months for a) video conferencing functions and/or b) chat and data storage functions in favour of alternative software, and thereafter to look into the feasibility of a phase-out of Microsoft Windows on computers in the UCU branch office.
2) To recommend branch staff, officers and members use alternatives to Microsoft Office 365, for example the free OnlyOffice.com software which largely replicates Office 365.
3) To receive a report on progress within six months.

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