

Statement from the LSE Liberated Zone, 19 June 2024

As of 15:51 yesterday, the **School Management Committee (SMC) has ended negotiations with the Liberated Zone**. The SMC has claimed they are unable to continue negotiations due to their students and staff's **non-violent protest** yesterday, 17 June, during the Liberated Zone's decampment. LSE dragged student protestors to court, and have become **the first university in the UK to evict student protestors. And now they are refusing to negotiate with us**. They fear us. They fear our organising, our solidarity networks, and our collective will. But, **our cause is liberation, and we are not finished**.

We are acutely aware this news comes on **256th day** of ongoing genocide in Gaza. 40,000 people are dead; 10,000 more are under the rubble. **These numbers do not do justice to the travesty we are witnessing through our phone screens. Every martyr is a world ended, every martyr is a moral failing for all companies, institutions, and governments that are complicit in these crimes against humanity, including the London School of Economics.**

It is unacceptable that **an institution that prides itself on "academic freedom"**, would choose to not only **take students to court**, infringing on their rights to **freedom of expression and freedom of assembly**, but would further **silence them by ending negotiations. Our democratic right to engage in protest of our University's actions is not a bargaining chip to be leveraged to halt negotiations.**

We also want to inform our community that due to LSE's Interim Possession Order (IPO), it is not just students and staff who were engaging in the occupation—but everyone in the LSE community—who are at **risk of prosecution if they protest in the ground floor and atrium of the Marshall Bloom Building* in the next twelve months**. This will have a chilling effect on the freedom of expression and assembly at our institution. The possibility of a **criminal prosecution** for simply exercising our **fundamental rights to protest deeply undermines the core values of a university**.

The SMC has claimed they have ended negotiations over (a) the opening of the Portsmouth Street windows in the Bloom Building to allow people in and, (b) the peaceful protest in front of Sir Arthur Lewis building yesterday. At yesterday's rally, **we invited LSE and wider London community to join us and enter the Bloom Building in the final 20 minutes before the court order would come into effect to highlight LSE's outrageous legal battle with students**. In regards to the opening of the Portsmouth Street windows, we remind both the SMC and the broader LSE community that **de-colonization is not a metaphor** and the opening of these windows was a tangible act in breaking down the walls of LSE's ivory tower.

Moreover, University buildings do not belong to the LSE Administration; power in the hallowed halls of a University comes from students, staff, and the university community. The University should be a place of education, and the Liberated Zone has always been a place of political education, shared knowledge production, and collective learning.

The buildings never belonged to the administrators, they belong to us. Today, and every day since May 14, the Liberated Zone has been engaged in the true purpose of a University: to educate and be educated, without cost and without barriers.

The SMC further claimed the negotiations were terminated due to the interactions between security and protestors at the rally; however we want to emphasise the unnecessary confrontation initiated by security, was overseen by Director of Facilities Management, **Allan Blair**, and Security Operations Manager, **Richard Mulcahy**, and sanctioned by

School management. LSE's heads of security watched as their staff acted violently towards protestors, especially disturbing in light of the fact that the majority of the occupiers are female, including a large contingent of Muslim students. All of this takes place against a backdrop of [LSE silencing](#) victims of sexual harassment in their staff. After weeks of leveraging "health and safety concerns" to shut down the student occupation, it is in fact **LSE that is putting our health and safety in danger.**

The decision by the SMC to discontinue negotiations with students on divestment sets a disappointing precedent for constructive engagement between the student body and school management. That the SMC went back on this commitment immediately after the encampment ended makes it much less likely for students to view negotiations with management as a productive pathway in the future. We suggest that SMC reconsider and resume negotiations before students are compelled to take further action, as even though we have now since left the Bloom Building, **our power is not diminished.**

On **June 25**, the LSE Council, the highest Governing body of LSE, is voting on divestment. The LSE Students Union (LSESU) referendum on divestment won with **89% of the student vote**; the Liberated Zone has popular support of the LSE community. Students and staff refuse to continue allow crimes against humanity to be committed in our name: **we demand divestment and we will continue to act until we get it.**

What we demand from LSE is reasonable: divestment from their blood soaked investment returns. The LSE Liberated Zone is not finished. LSE beware, the Liberated Zone is everywhere.

*Renamed in memoriam after Marshall Bloom, a U.S. anti-apartheid and anti-war student activist who was suspended from LSE for leading its 1967 student occupation, the first in the UK, against LSE's complicity in Rhodesian apartheid. Bloom subsequently died by suicide following his draft call into the Vietnam War. The building is formally (and now formerly) known as the Marshall Building, but the students condemn any official association of LSE with Sir Paul Marshall, the major owner of GB News and exposed racist, for whom the building was named.