

## **Statement from the LSE Liberated Zone, 29 May 2024**

In the face of farcical health and safety concerns, a lack of consistent communication, and bad faith negotiating, LSE students continue to occupy the ground floor of the Marshall Bloom\* Building.

After almost a week without a response from the School Management Committee (SMC), students decided to expand the borders of the LSE Liberated Zone. Only after this expansion did the SMC respond to our attempts to negotiate. In this response, SMC weaponised health and safety concerns in an attempt to scare students. However, as the ones sleeping, eating, and living in this space, we have already prioritised our health and safety.

We were not informed of any alleged health and safety risks until day ten of our encampment. Students decided to remain in the space, taking all necessary precautions to minimize possible threats to health and safety. Contrary to the SMC's insistence, there are no increased fire risks due to the encampment's expansion. Most importantly, illegitimate concerns over fire risks within a modern £145 million building are nothing compared to the unrelenting atrocities in Rafah, Gaza, and wider Palestine, atrocities which the University continues to fund.

To buttress their claim that the encampment endangered students, the SMC sent in a privately-hired individual to conduct a fire risk assessment of our encampment. Predictably, this investigator deemed the space risky, claiming that "it is likely that any visit by the fire service would result in a prohibition notice being issued." As we detail below, the fire service disagreed.

On 28 May, the SMC assured individuals negotiating on behalf of the LSE Liberated Zone that we would be allowed to bring in an external organization to conduct our own fire safety assessment. We felt that our own independent inspection was imperative to rule out any potential prejudice in favor of SMC's agenda, especially given the dearth of information shared about the SMC's commissioned inspector. At 5:00 PM today, 29 May, members from the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) attempted to enter the Bloom Building to assess health and safety concerns. Contradicting their own email from a day earlier, the SMC ordered the Director of Facilities Management, Allan Blair, and Security Operations Manager, Richard Mulcahy, to prevent FBU members from entering the building. This refusal is inconsistent with the numerous "legal and moral" concerns that they have raised about our health and safety in prior days. By refusing additional fire safety checks by legitimate London firefighters, the SMC delegitimised their own alleged concerns. False apprehensions about student well-being should not be weaponised to dismantle the encampment.

### **The SMC care about student silence, not student safety.**

After FBU members were disallowed entry into the Bloom Building, the London Fire Brigade (LFB) was contacted. A Fire Safety Officer from the LFB finally was granted entry into the Bloom Building and conducted a full fire safety check. The officer reported *no* problems and *no* compromises to the safety of the building or individuals within the encampment. The officer assured us that they will check the high rise allocation of the Bloom Building and notify the two nearest fire stations of our encampment in order to establish a

Pre-Determined Attendance (PDA), a recommended level of resourcing that establishes the amount of fire engines, equipment, and specialist teams that must be deployed in the case of a fire within the Bloom Building. The sole recommendation, made separately from the assessment, was to disperse the electrical outlets utilised. We have since implemented this recommendation.

We, not the SMC, sought and enacted improvements to our safety. The SMC demonstrated their lack of concern by withholding the "serious" findings of its private investigator until after they announced to LSE PhDs and faculty employed in the Bloom Building that the building would be closed the following day, 30 May. If poor fire safety had been a legitimate concern, surely SMC would have notified the Liberated Zone and contacted fire safety inspectors within the first ten days of the encampment.

*We contacted the Fire Brigades Union. We solicited the London Fire Brigade. We keep each other safe.*

Having addressed all health and safety concerns, the LSE Liberated Zone looks forward to discussing with SMC our primary concern: egregious investments that harm the health, safety, and existence of the Palestinian people.

The students united will never be defeated!

\*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 committed 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.

### **Executive Summary of the Statement from the LSE Liberated Zone, 29 May 2024**

- During a negotiation meeting yesterday, 28/05, members of the SMC committee ensured negotiators on behalf of the LSE Liberated Zone that the collective could conduct our own independent fire safety assessment.
- Today, 29/05, at 5:00 PM, members of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) attempted to enter the LSE Liberated Zone to consult regarding fire safety.
- The Fire Brigades Union, attempting to conduct its assessment, was **denied entry** due to a new (and contradictory) directive from the SMC.
- The Fire Safety Officer of the London Fire Brigade (LFB) was eventually allowed entry and conducted a complete fire safety assessment.
- The Fire Safety Officer reported **no** problems and **no** compromises to the safety of the building and individuals within the encampment.
- The sole recommendation was to disperse the electrical outlets utilised. We have since implemented this recommendation.
- **The SMC lie - it was never about fire risks or health and safety concerns. The SMC do not care about our safety. The SMC want our silence.**