

## **Executive Summary of the Statement from the LSE Liberated Zone, 30 May 2024**

- **The LSE Liberated Zone will leave the Bloom Building\* once our demands are met.**
- Divestment from all four egregious activities in the *Assets in Apartheid* report is imperative and urgent.
- There have only been conversations with the SMC surrounding **three of our ten demands** (Designate, Dedicate, & Disengage), and these largely appeared pre-determined before the meeting.
- The SMC is refusing to discuss Divestment, despite an initial meeting with LSESU Palestine society in January. The SMC were given substantive draft findings of the *Assets in Apartheid report* in March. The final report was officially handed over to them on 14 May, now over two weeks ago.
- The Investments Subcommittee put discussion of the *Assets in Apartheid* on their agenda, but we have not been sent their 'recommendations' as per the communications of SMC. We were not provided the Subcommittee's meeting minutes, as these are not public, so we are unable to substantiate if divestment was discussed meaningfully or at all.
- Regarding the closure of the Bloom Building, the SMC would rather shut down a building than engage with us on divestment and other demands.

## **Public Statement from the LSE Liberated Zone, 30 May 2024**

It has been 236 days since October 7 and the beginning of the genocide in Gaza. Estimates put the death count at 36,000 martyrs, however, as the health system in Gaza is no longer functioning due to the destruction of hospitals by the Israeli war machine, the death count in reality is much higher. Palestinians have been forced from 'safe zone' to 'safe zone,' only to be bombed with Western support time and time again. Four days ago, 45 more men, women, and children were martyred when Israel bombed Palestinians sheltering in a tent camp in Rafah. Reports from the massacre stated that Palestinians did not have enough water to put out the fires from the bombs, so they used sand. Fathers held up their headless children to the world, begging us to pay attention.

**The LSE Liberated Zone exists because we refuse to continue 'business as usual,' knowing the crimes against humanity that are currently taking place in Gaza. We are watching a genocide unfold through our phone screens: to be silent is to be complicit.**

Since January, the School Management Committee (SMC) has been aware their investment portfolio includes direct and indirect investments to crimes against the Palestinian people. Further, the SMC is more than complicit, they are actively aware of the destruction that companies they fund are unleashing on innocent people in Gaza. **The blood of Palestinians is, in no uncertain terms, on the SMC's hands.**

**The only moral response from the SMC to the horror and destruction being wrought in Gaza is immediate divestment from all companies engaging in crimes against the Palestinian people.**

**The LSE Liberated Zone will leave the Bloom building\* once our demands are met. Divestment from crimes against the Palestinian people is imperative and urgent.**

Per their recent community update, the SMC claimed to be engaging in "constructive dialogue" with the Liberated Zone. The SMC has refused to engage with us on fair and democratic terms by mutually agreeing on one set of meeting minutes, and therefore one legal record. Instead, their narrative constitutes the record, our comments are merely supplementary - we know that this has legal implications in terms of documenting their complicity and as a record of why we protest too. We want to emphasize the first time any of our ten demands were on the negotiating table was this 28/05 (ie. two days ago and fourteen days into the occupation of the Bloom Building). Moreover, **the SMC has still refused to negotiate with us on divestment.** We have received notice that LSE's Investment Subcommittee, who also convened on 28 May, had placed discussion of the *Assets in Apartheid* report on the agenda. But this is not enough. The Investments Subcommittee put discussion of the *Assets in Apartheid* on their agenda, but we have not been sent their 'recommendations' as per the communications of SMC. We were not provided the Subcommittee's meeting minutes, as these are not public, so we are unable to substantiate if divestment was discussed meaningfully or at all.

In their community-wide email today, the SMC, stated that our presence "prompted an urgent fire risk assessment to be carried out by independent fire safety officials. This is required by UK law." This is not true: the fire assessment was not "prompted;" it was requested and paid for by the LSE to deliver them a biased report. If it was required by UK law, it would have been done two weeks prior, when the occupation began. The SMC is trying to coerce us into taking down posters, allegedly combustible material, and moving into the corner we previously held, but shrinking the camp's space will create a greater safety risk for students. **The problem was always, and remains, the liberation of the Portsmouth Street side of the Bloom Building, with students' posters condemning LSE's complicity in and silence on the genocide in Gaza.**

The London Fire Brigade (LFB)—an independent body with comprehensive authority in relation to building fire safety regulations—has since visited the Liberated Zone. The LFB's Fire Safety Officer entered the Bloom Building on the afternoon of 29 May, following the SMC's refusal to allow members of the Fire Brigade Union into the Bloom Building. As we stated yesterday, his checks contradict the findings of the LSE's paid visitor. Prior to this, the SMC had assured the Liberated Zone's negotiators in a meeting, on 28 May, that we would be permitted our own independent consultant. **As has been proved time and time again: the SMC lies.**

We are clear: it was never about fire safety. **The SMC does not care about student safety, they want to silence us.**

If it is not the physical presence of the occupation which poses a threat to the LSE community, it appears that our ideas alone—our anti-genocidal discourse, our unified strength, and our continued resistance of LSE's complicity—are what have led to the closure of the Bloom Building today (30 May). Given that such a large number of students on the side of peace and justice are Muslim, it is not difficult to interpret their attempted isolation of the encampment and 'danger' discourse as latent Islamophobia. All their outward justifications fall so far short of satisfactory that they are either lies or a cover for more sinister motivations (ie. the forced dismantling and destruction of the collective). **We take satisfaction in knowing that there is no business as usual on our campus while LSE remains complicit in the ongoing mass-slaughter of Gazan civilians.** The SMC would rather shut down the Bloom building than substantively engage with us on our demands.

The SMC firstly made clear that they will, under no circumstances, issue political statements. According to Eric Neumayer, this position extends to even cyclist safety despite two LSE staff being killed in cycling accidents in the last year: it is a "slippery slope". The statement issued in recognition of the horrors of Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine was allegedly 'a mistake.' This stance most likely renders many of our demands beyond discussion, unless LSE shifts its untenable position of 'institutional neutrality.' Regarding the few demands the SMC has publicly engaged with (Designate, Dedicate, & Disengage), we acknowledge the commitments the SMC has made, but emphasise that they are **patently different from our demands**.

In regards to our fourth demand, **Designate**, the SMC will contribute £250,000 to the general Scholars At Risk scheme, accessible to any eligible applicants. This is the same amount as was given to the scheme just nine days after the invasion of Ukraine, which now comes after eight months of genocide, and months after the first SMC meeting with the Palestine Society in January, when they were made aware of this egregious discrepancy.

However, this is not a satisfaction of our demands. We would like to reiterate our very clear call to action for LSE to "explicitly extend its Scholars At Risk to the Palestinian academic community as per the guidance of the Scholars At Risk network". Again, *specific* guidance on the current crisis includes aspects like "**Establishing a dedicated fellowship schemes to support at-risk scholars** who are able to travel (consider for reference the European Union's [MSCA4Ukraine](#) program, which supports displaced researchers from Ukraine)". This means Palestinian-specific scholarships and funding, as we demand. We also support the LSE UCU's demands, which include—among other things—multiplying scholarships and fundraising and expanding eligibility, contributing to remote education schemes by Palestinian universities, providing fee waivers, and visa support in coordination with charities.

Indeed, regarding Amena El Ashkar's case specifically, we are glad that her scholarship and offer will be held, however we are disappointed that **LSE is not taking any further actions to support her visa application**. The Home Office has kept her from entering the country to pursue her degree on the arbitrary, discriminatory basis that her presence would not be "conducive to the public good". Having offered her a place in this university, LSE has a duty to rectify this.

In response to our fifth demand, **Dedicate**, the SMC claims that it cannot provide funding to assist the rebuilding of Palestinian society and academia, on the grounds that LSE is classified as a charity. However, partnerships with other universities, as called for by LSE, University and College Union (UCU), and by ourselves, include funding allocation. Moreover, LSE regularly gives £150,000 grants to non-profit and for-profit enterprises through the Marshall Institute's £50 million "*100x Impact Accelerator*" scheme. Given this—just one example of massive institutional funding—it seems highly unlikely that they are unable to fund Palestinian scholarships directly.

And finally, to our sixth demand, **Disengage**, the SMC agreed to "seek to provide anti-bias training for all those charged with implementing the Prevent duty." This has nothing to do with our demand. We are well aware that implementing Prevent is a statutory requirement for all universities in England and Wales; we wish to counter the bias and islamophobia which Prevent training empowers through independent 'Preventing Prevent' training delivered by independent groups like the LSE Student Union (LSESU), UCU, Unite, Unison, and the LSESU Islamic Society. We have no interest in any anti-bias training delivered by any body bound by Prevent, nor any that allowed for Benny Morris to come and spew hate speech on our

campus; his very rhetoric, notably conflating Muslims with terrorists, mirrors exactly what makes Prevent so dangerous.

**Bad faith has, of course, been the norm for negotiations with the SMC since the beginning: bad faith is apparently #PartOfLSE.** We are still awaiting a response to our complete list of demands, as the SMC has only negotiated three thus far. Despite agreeing to six total weeks of bi-weekly meetings, the SMC has not given assurances that divestment will be on the agenda. **In no written communication to either the Liberated Zone or the wider LSE community, has the word "divestment" been used.** Therefore, despite attempting to placate the student body with assurances of "constructive dialogue," it has become clear that the SMC is not concerned with divestment or their responsibilities regarding crimes against the Palestinian people.

We remind our community that the report's initial findings made clear LSE's complicity back in January, and again when a further draft was presented in March. Far too many innocent lives have been taken by the genocidal Israeli state in the time since, with LSE's financial assistance. **"Institutional neutrality" is institutional complicity.**

The LSE Liberated Zone insists that the students' demands are taken seriously and given the urgency they require.