

## **Statement from the LSE Liberated Zone, 08 June 2024**

As of 16:41 today, **the LSE Liberated Zone was served a 'formal' notice both by hand and by email requesting the collective to leave the Bloom Building\* by 9:00 on Monday 10 June. We want to remind the LSE community that this is not a legal notice, it is a piece of paper.** Until the SMC provide notice of actual legal proceedings, in whatever form they may take, we remain in the same legal standing as we have since our encampment began.

In both community-wide emails and in direct correspondence with the Liberated Zone, the School Management Committee has often cited fire safety concerns as their justification for requesting the immediate dissolution of our encampment. Specifically, the SMC has referred to two "independent" fire safety assessments, one conducted on 28 May and the other on 4 June. **However, our collective questions the extent to which these reports can be considered "independent."** In regards to the assessment conducted on 4 June, this was performed by two "senior fire engineers" from **Ove Arup and Partners**. This report was signed off by two assessors from **Arup**. Barbara Lane, the "senior validating Director" of the report, is named in SMC's email as an 'expert witness' for the Grenfell inquiry, which was considered by Grenfell survivors and family members to be a cover up.

**We are also aware of Arup's long history with LSE and believe their involvement highlights a concerning conflict of interest.**

The 'Cities' MSc and PhD programmes which ran from 1994- 2014 at LSE were run by **Arup**, and they continue to fund the Cities research centre at the university. They are also **a major consultant on LSE's new building development**, the Firoz Lalji Hub. Arup cc'ed **David Higgins**, the 'independent' chair of the LSE Finance and Estates Committee, in their correspondence with us on fire safety. We find this highly unusual, especially considering **Higgins' recent work with Arup in a private capacity**. On top of all of this, the fire safety assessment undertaken by Arup was done so with a **complete lack of transparency**. Inspectors were accompanied the entire time by SMC member **Eric Neumayer**, and **refused to provide verification or engage with members of the encampment**. This is despite being given explicit permission by the School beforehand that we could accompany the inspectors.

**We therefore seriously question how independent this report truly is when there is so much evidence to suggest that Arup is on the LSE Payroll.**

In addition to this, despite claiming that the University "respects the right of members of the School community to peacefully protest," the imminent threat of legal action that has been levelled against the Liberated Zone shows this statement could not be further from the truth. **The School Management Committee (SMC) cares only about its reputation and profit, and is willing to violate the democratic rights of the University's students to protect it.**

The SMC also claims that the Bloom Building is private property.

**We remind them that the power of a University comes from the students, and that their property would lie cold and empty without us.** The buildings may be

private, but it is the student collective who truly represent the spirit of a higher education institution, to learn, to challenge, and to write history.

**It is despicable that in the latest school-wide message the SMC would choose to mention its "moral responsibility," when at this very moment companies our University invests in funding genocide, occupation, the arms trade, and fossil fuel production. The only moral response from the SMC in regards to the ongoing genocide in Gaza is immediate divestment.**

We firmly reject the School's assertion that occupiers "do not have permission for occupation of any area". Since the beginning of our encampment on May 14th, **all campers and visitors to the Bloom Building have been entering only with express permission from LSE Security.** This was a fact the SMC recognised in its own school-wide communication applauding "the heroic efforts and good will of our security officers". The mere fact that multiple guest speakers and visitors have been turned away from entering the Bloom Building illustrates that **LSE have the power to deny permission to some people; the protestors occupying Bloom have not been denied that permission** despite LSE and its security team's full knowledge of the ongoing encampment.

It is no accident that many students, staff, and faculty have had their daily activities in the Bloom Building disrupted. **Any principled student protest or occupation cannot co-exist with business as usual.** We remind the SMC that student occupiers have exams, assignments, jobs, and caring responsibilities just as the rest of the LSE community facing this disruption does. However, many of us have taken up this occupation as part of **our moral responsibility** to disrupt this institution that is actively funding the genocide of the Palestinian people, and enacting racist and Islamophobic violence against our own comrades.

**We will be in contact with our supporters in the coming days requesting additional support. We once again remind the LSE community it is us, the student occupiers, who hold the power —not the SMC, the Finance and Estates Committee, nor the University Council.**

\*Renamed in memorium after Marshall Bloom, an American anti-apartheid and anti-war student activist who was suspended from LSE for leading the first student occupation in the UK here in 1967 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 it is named.