



**BREAKING: POLICE ARREST OXFORD STUDENTS AT PEACEFUL SIT-IN;
HUNDREDS GATHER TO PROTEST OUTSIDE OFFICES**

Students began a sit-in at the University's Administrative Offices in Wellington Square promising to remain until the Vice Chancellor agrees to negotiate

23 May 2024; Oxford, UK --

UPDATE: This morning the University of Oxford called the police on students who had staged a peaceful sit-in inside the Vice Chancellor's office. The protestors' intentions were clear: students would only stay in the building until the Administration agreed to meet for negotiations. Instead of engaging in productive dialogue, the University chose the path of violence. 16 student demonstrators have been arrested but most remain inside the building, and are being denied bathroom access. Over a hundred community members mobilised to block the exits and prevent police from leaving with the arrested peaceful student protestors.

Students walked into the Wellington Square Office building complex this morning at 8 AM and faced no confrontation. After arriving in the Vice Chancellor's office, they initiated the sit-in. The Vice Chancellor came to speak with the protestors, falsely stating that the University was attempting to use "the established channels" to communicate with students – despite the fact that she has repeatedly ignored meeting requests from OA4P student representatives. When police arrived at the scene, student protestors were engaging in a peaceful sit-in demonstration. When informed of the threat of arrest, the students willingly stood up and voluntarily offered

to vacate the premises. In an escalatory move, all students peacefully demonstrating were arrested and their phones were confiscated, taking away their ability to record or film from inside.

For live updates, visit our social media @OxAct4Pal on X, Instagram, and TikTok.

For photos and videos of today's action and encounters with police, visit our Press Kit at OxAct4Pal.com. For interviews and other enquiries, contact: m: 07341377729; e: oxpalpress@proton.me.

In a statement issued this morning, OA4P outlined its rationale for the sit-in and urged the Administration to negotiate immediately.

"This morning, after months of ignored protests, walk-outs, encampments, and requests to meet, Oxford Action for Palestine has begun a sit-in at the University Administration offices on Wellington Square. We entered with the intention to remain until we could engage in dialogue with the Vice Chancellor, but instead of choosing this path forward, the Administration decided to evacuate the building. We intend to remain until the Administration agrees to negotiate with our coalition, which has called on the University to end its enabling of israel's genocide, occupation, and ongoing colonisation of Palestine.

We begin this action with a renewed sense of urgency. Late last night, our encampment in front of the Pitt Rivers Museum was attacked yet again by a hostile actor armed with a knife. A small group of individuals aggressively approached our encampment and hurled vulgar antisemitic slurs at our Jewish community member who tried to deescalate the altercation. They tore down our banner which enumerates our demands and wielded a knife at us before proceeding to cut through our only large banner with Arabic writing. This is not the first time we have been attacked for protesting israel's genocide, and it likely will not be the last. We have been made visible targets through the fearmongering of the Prime Minister, irresponsible media, and the University Administration, all of which stoke perceptions of us as a threatening presence on campus. The Vice Chancellor's continued silence on Gaza makes us vulnerable to further violence, and we can no longer wait idly while she refuses to meet with us.

More importantly, Gaza cannot wait. The establishment of our first Gaza solidarity encampment coincided with israel's ground assault on Rafah on 6 May. Since then, over 800,000 people have been forced to flee the area. israel's blocking of food, fuel, and medical supplies has triggered widespread famine and shortages of care.

Decomposed bodies of 62 Palestinians were discovered at another mass grave found at al-Shifa hospital, the seventh found so far in Gaza. Israel has continued carpet bombing neighborhoods across the strip, from southern Rafah to Jabalia refugee camp in the north – where a journalist has described attacks as "one of the most rapid mass killings of civilians" across Gaza since the early days of the genocide. On Nakba Day (May 15), Israel bombed Nuseirat refugee camp and targeted a school sheltering over 12,000 refugees.

Despite these horrifying developments, the University has offered nothing more than an empty statement on what it refers to as the “events in Gaza”. It refuses to name Israel's acts of genocide, scholasticide, forced famine, mass killings of civilians, and war crimes. It also refuses to confront the ways that it aids and abets this genocide through its investments and partnerships, and it refuses dialogue with our coalition altogether. Emails leaked this week reveal that the Administration has preemptively classified acts of non-violent protest within the University sphere as threats equivalent to terrorist actions, according to their 'Gold and Silver' tier system. In the two weeks since we've requested a meeting, the Administration invented a system to punish us more swiftly than it provided a time for us to meet.

The University has issued countless excuses to shirk its responsibility to meet our coalition, including an assertion that we are not a registered student organisation and therefore not part of the student body it is accountable to. We have clearly demonstrated OA4P is a student-led initiative, and our action today reinforces that fact. But we also reject the age-old tactic of dividing our movement between student and non-student. We are proud to be joined by the faculty and staff whose labour produces Oxford's profits and by the community members whose livelihoods are tied to the domineering presence of this University in their city. In Oxford, throughout the UK, and across the world, everyone has stake in the University's financing of genocide.

In just two weeks, OA4P's encampment and its demands have received overwhelming support. Over 2400 students, 600 members of faculty and staff, 14 local trade unions, and 200 University healthcare workers have signed open letters calling on the University of Oxford to cut ties with Israeli genocide, occupation, and apartheid. Dozens of college common rooms have passed motions in support of our demands. Thousands on campus have mobilised for the rallies, teach-ins, vigils, and community events we've organised at the encampment, and millions around the world have watched Oxford emerge as a central battlefield in the global higher-education struggle for a free Palestine.

Unfortunately, the University will not listen to its own students, employees, or wider community unless we disrupt business as usual. We have exhausted all other possible avenues of communication, and we must make our voices heard. We will not leave the Administration offices in Wellington Square until the University agrees to negotiate on the preconditions we have already requested, including a meeting within twenty-four hours and the provision of amnesty, with no retaliatory measures, for all those exercising their right to protest genocide, occupation, apartheid, and settler-colonialism.

Free Palestine. All eyes on Gaza."

Oxford Action for Palestine (OA4P) is a coalition of students, faculty, staff, and other members of the University of Oxford community who are dedicated to the liberation of Palestine. On May 6, OA4P established a Liberated Zone encampment in solidarity with Gaza, calling on the University to cut financial and institutional ties with Israeli genocide, occupation, and apartheid. For updates, visit the OxAct4Pal.com and find us on Instagram, X, and TikTok on [@OxAct4Pal](https://www.instagram.com/OxAct4Pal).

###