

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: OXFORD JEWISH FACULTY ISSUE OPEN LETTER IN SUPPORT OF GAZA SOLIDARITY ENCAMPMENT

Twelve Jewish faculty members at the University of Oxford urge the Administration to negotiate with students and challenge the allegations of antisemitism that have been leveled against the encampment.

29 May 2024; OXFORD, UK -- Yesterday, twelve prominent Jewish faculty members from across the University released an open letter to the Vice-Chancellor, criticising the University for using antisemitism to "justify government interference in higher education and repression of student protest." **The faculty note their pride in the Oxford students participating in the Gaza solidarity encampment and reject the claims that the encampment is an unsafe space for Jewish people.** Additionally, the faculty reveal that they contacted the Vice-Chancellor's office to open a dialogue on the encampment, and note that the Administration initially ignored this offer but have now offered the faculty signatories a meeting following the open letter's release. To read the full statement, visit oxact4pal.com

In their open letter to Vice-Chancellor Irene Tracey, they write:

"We therefore object to the University's reductive and misleading claims to speak on our behalf. The characterisation of Jews as a uniform mass with a single viewpoint is itself a common and insidious antisemitic trope..... We implore you to listen to—and learn from—our students who have been urging the University to reckon with its complicity in the catastrophe unfolding in Gaza."

QUOTES:

"The letter came out of our support of the Palestine Solidarity Encampment, and our concern that it should not be repressed in our name. Assuming that all Jewish students and staff think and feel alike is reductive. Far from being intimidated by the protesting students, we admire them, and urge the University to engage with them in good faith." - **Reuben Binns**, Associate Professor of Computer Science

"We felt we needed to push back publicly against the University's attempt to pit "our Jewish students and staff" against Oxford Action for Palestine protestors. There is no single unified "Jewish community" or Jewish point of view on this war. Personally, as a Jew, what makes me "feel uncomfortable" and causes me to experience "significant disruption," to quote the University's recent communications, is the fact that genocide is being committed in my name as we speak." - **Daniela Dover**, Associate Professor of Philosophy

Oxford Action for Palestine Coalition released the following statement:

"The open letter from Jewish faculty comes mere days after antisemitic graffiti was found in Regent's Park College. Oxford Action for Palestine notes that it is profoundly disappointing that the media has decided to associate this disturbing incident with our encampment. A piece by The Sunday Times irresponsibly includes images of our encampment in their report on the Nazi imagery found in the Regent's Park College toilets. It should not need to be said, but there is nothing antisemitic about demanding liberation for the Palestinian people. In the context of israel's latest genocidal massacre, in which the IOF burned people alive while they sheltered in tents, these baseless accusations against

our encampment ring all the more hollow. There are no universities left in Gaza, yet our Administration continues to speak as though our camp is a threat to higher education. The Jewish members of our community are particularly affected by this reckless framing. As antisemitism continues to be weaponised against the Palestinian cause, we lose the ability to understand and counter antisemitic incidents in our communities.

We are deeply disturbed by the swastikas in Regent's - and we are also appalled by the antisemitic attacks faced by members of our encampment that have gone unnoticed by the University Administration. Last week, a Jewish member of OA4P experienced antisemitic harassment, which resulted in a hostile actor pulling out a pocket knife and slashing one of our banners. In the first week of our encampment, six men jumped out of a van and hurled horrific abuse at the Jewish members of our community. Two days ago, a man ripped one of our banners from the Radcliffe Camera and chased after the Jewish member of our community who tried to recover it. The man threw this student to the ground, and then returned to camp the following day with an accomplice to spray our banners, as well as the face of a member of the public, with blue paint. Two of the seventeen protestors arrested last Thursday at Wellington Square were Jewish. The University of Oxford continuously speaks of its prioritisation of Jewish safety, but clearly, the safety of Jewish students involved in the pro-Palestine movement are not included in this gesture. As the University continues to neglect its anti-Zionist Jewish students, we question the extent to which the University is truly concerned with cases of antisemitism. So far, it appears that the Administration is only interested in engaging antisemitism as a talking point to avoid accountability for its role in the Israeli genocide of the Palestinian people."

QUOTE:

"The only antisemitism that I have experienced on Oxford's campus has been from those who oppose my Jewish commitment to Palestinian liberation. My Jewish identity is rooted in freedom for all people, and I find any attempt to connect my safety to the Israeli genocide of the Palestinian people abhorrent. Antisemitism is real and horrifying, but there is nothing antisemitic about fighting for a free Palestine. Our media and political classes have shamefully used antisemitism as a cover for their material complicity in genocide, and I refuse to let them co-opt my identity for this purpose." - **Jewish student and encampment member, DPhil in Politics**

For interviews and other enquiries, contact: m:

07341377729; e: oxpalpress@proton.me; @OxAct4Pal on X, Instagram, and TikTok. For a Press Kit and other resources, visit linktr.ee/OxAct4Pal.

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 OA4P linktree at linktr.ee/OxAct4Pal and find us on Instagram, X, and TikTok on @OxAct4Pal.

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