

RELEASE: OA4P CALLS ON ADMIN TO NEGOTIATE AFTER STAGING DIE-IN AT GRADUATIONS

Nearly fifty students in blood-soaked academic dress blocked entry to the Sheldonian Theatre; Faced harassment from Uni security

18 May 2024; OXFORD, UK -- On Saturday morning, University of Oxford students staged a "die-in" protest outside of graduation ceremonies at the Sheldonian Theatre. Nearly fifty students in blood-soaked academic dress blocked entry to the Sheldonian Theatre, with guests and graduands having to climb over protestors to gain entry into the building. The action, organised by Oxford Action for Palestine (OA4P), called on the University Administration to commence negotiations with the coalition. Despite the rapidly-growing campus-wide support for the OA4P encampment and its demands, the Administration has thus far refused contact.

During the die-in, University security harassed students who lay still on the ground in front of the Sheldonian. In two instances, security kicked students and shut doors on their heads – both of which were caught on camera. Despite this unacceptable harassment, the action proceeded without violent escalation. It was followed by a brief action at the Radcliffe Camera, where students hung a banner that read "OUR TUITION FEES = BLOOD MONEY" outside the library window.

For photos and videos of today's action, as well as of harassment from University security officers, visit our Press Kit at linktr.ee/OxAct4Pal.

In a statement from OA4P issued this afternoon, the coalition declared today's action to be a powerful indicator of the strength behind the campaign and issued another call on the Vice Chancellor to meet with the coalition immediately.

"As students at the University of Oxford, we cannot in good conscience celebrate graduations when we know full well that there are no more universities, no more graduations, and no more milestones for students in Gaza. 5,479 students, 261 teachers, 95 professors, and three university presidents have been murdered in Israel's genocidal campaign. We disrupted graduations today to force the University's attention onto this horrific reality.

We also are alarmed by the treatment of students by University security officers today, who kicked students lying on the ground and slammed doors on their heads. For the past two weeks, Admin encouraged lies about us being a 'hostile' presence on campus, which enabled men to lobby physical threats and vitriol to us at camp. Now, the University's *own staff* are harassing student protestors. This brazen hostility was yet another example of this University's priorities: the Vice Chancellor would rather bankroll a genocide and watch us get hurt than sit down and meet their own students. The longer they go without commencing negotiations, the more they place us in harm's way.

The University must enter negotiations with OA4P based on the preconditions that have been communicated to them this morning. Our encampment has been up for two weeks, and the entire university community – thousands of students, hundreds of faculty, and over a dozen trade unions – is calling on the Administration to act."

The mass action follows a surge of support for the Gaza solidarity encampment in recent days. Just yesterday, fourteen Oxford trade unions – including the Oxford UCU – issued their resounding endorsement of the action and its demands. Over 550 faculty and staff have signed a letter to stand firmly in support of the encampment and its demands, over 1200 students of the University have already signed an Open Letter campaign in just 48 hours, and motions have been passed across 30 Oxford college student associations. Despite the overwhelming and broad-based support from students, faculty, staff, and community members, the University refuses to engage with the coalition.

Kendall Gardner, a DPhil candidate in Politics, was one of the students demonstrating in front of the Sheldonian. **She said**, "Today's action was a massive success. It was inspiring to see how many students were willing to put their bodies on the line for Gaza, and heartening to see how much of the community supported us as they walked past. But until the Administration agrees to come to the negotiating table and meet our demands, we have far more work to do."

EVENT SUMMARY:

At 10:00AM, students arrived en masse at the Sheldonian theatre and staged a photo out front, holding up banners and spelling out "Blood On Your Hands" with red letters pinned to their clothing.

At 10:30AM, students lie down at all entrances of the plaza surrounding the Sheldonian building, disrupting entryways to graduation. Guests, graduands, and University officials attempted to enter the Sheldonian Theatre

Between 10:30AM and 1:30PM, students remained in front of the Sheldonian and their numbers grew. At this time, they faced hostility from University security, who kicked students while they were on the ground and shut the doors of the Sheldonian onto students heads.

Student protestors left the area shortly after 1:30pm, following the beginning of the day's second graduation ceremony.

Later in the afternoon, student protestors hung a banner that read "OUR TUITION FEES = BLOOD MONEY" outside the window of the Radcliffe Camera.

For photos and videos of today's action, visit our Press Kit at linktr.ee/OxAct4Pal. **To read OA4P's full statement** to the University issued this morning, visit our social media @OxAct4Pal on X, Instagram, and TikTok. **For interviews and other enquiries, contact:** m: 07341377729; e: oxpalpress@proton.me.

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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