

## **BREAKING: UVIC Students Begin Palestine Solidarity Encampment**

Monday, May 1, 2024; University of Victoria

This morning, University of Victoria students have erected a Palestine Solidarity Encampment on the quad. Attendees stand in solidarity with those steadfastly resisting in Palestine, and demand that the university divest from corporations that support Israel, cut academic ties with Israeli universities, and condemn the ongoing genocide of the Palestinians, which has been unjustly normalized by Western imperialist nations for over 75 years and horrifically accelerated by the Israeli entity with its unrelenting assault on Gaza.

History will not look kindly on those that stood by the genocidal and illegitimate settler-colonial project of Israel. After months of our protests and advocacy work being ignored by UVic administration, we will continue to stand our ground and the encampment will remain indefinitely until the university agrees to our demands and divests from genocide. We invite the community to join us. Free Palestine.

Our demands are as follows:

### **1) DIVEST**

**We demand that the University of Victoria divest from all investments connected to companies that contribute to and benefit from the genocide of the Palestinian people.**

This includes but **is not limited to**: Divestment from Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems Canada Ltd., BlackRock, and Scotiabank

1. **Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems Canada Ltd.** The Vancouver Island Technology Park is a University of Victoria Enterprise and is accountable to the University of Victoria Properties Investment Inc. The VITP is leasing out space to Thyssenkrupp Marine, which has a long-term relationship with Israel and the Israeli Offense Forces, building submarines and warships for them. In 2022, Dr. Rolf Wirtz, CEO of Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems said, "We, as Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems and Germans, are honoured and proud to continue the long cooperation – spanning decades – with the Israeli Ministry of Defence and the Israeli Navy. The new submarine class will provide Israel with the most advanced capabilities, based on innovative, cutting-edge technology."
2. **BlackRock.** UVic currently has \$4,344,342 invested in BlackRock, which is the world's largest asset manager. BlackRock has major investments in Israel and in major weapons companies such as Lockheed Martin, RTX, Northrop Grumman, Boeing, and General Dynamics, all of which are currently making record profits off of producing weapons that are being used to murder Palestinians.
3. **Scotiabank.** UVic currently has \$258,372 invested in Scotiabank. Scotiabank is the largest foreign investor in Israeli weapons manufacturer Elbit Systems. Elbit provides up to 85% of the Israeli military's land-based equipment and drones.

### **2) BOYCOTT**

**We demand that the University of Victoria and their Board of Governors support the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctioning of Israel.**

This includes but is not limited to ousting ThyssenKrupp Marine from renting space on university property, as the Board of Governors oversees the administration and control of university property.

**We demand that the University of Victoria cut all academic ties with Israeli universities and Zionist academics.**

This includes cancelling all ongoing and future academic exchanges with Israeli academics and institutions, including but not limited to, visiting scholars, student exchanges, and partnered publications. Israeli universities directly constrain Palestinian rights by supporting and even developing the policies of occupation and apartheid used by the Israeli state.

This encampment is in rejection of the University of Victoria's normalized relations and partnerships with universities that uphold policies of apartheid. It is hypocritical for university administration to boast their goals towards reconciliation and their support for the self-determination of Indigenous nations on Turtle Island while shaking hands with the Israeli occupation's academia.

Weapons manufacturers have no place in academia. This encampment is in rejection of the university's normalized investments and business-dealings with weapons manufacturers. The attendees of this encampment find it insulting and embarrassing that the University administration does not vet their investments for complicity in potential war crimes. The administration's corruption or ignorance in this oversight is a direct contradiction of their commitment to responsible investing, in which they promise to "[take] environmental, social and governance factors into consideration."

### **3) CONDEMN.**

**We demand that President Kevin Hall and the University of Victoria Board of Directors call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and publicly condemn the genocide and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians.**

We demand that President Kevin Hall and the University of Victoria acknowledge and condemn the genocide of the Palestinian people. The statements from October 13 & 30, 2023 relied upon the stereotyping of Palestinians as terrorists and the erasure of Israel's history of colonial violence. They contributed to the dehumanization of Palestinians, and supported a narrative that absolved Israel of responsibility for the collective punishment it continues to inflict on Gaza. This encampment rejects President Kevin Hall's backwards characterization of those statements as neutral or balanced. Subsequent silence on the issue is inexcusable considering that Israel has destroyed all 12 universities in Gaza during its ongoing bombardment since October 9, 2023.

### **4) AFFIRM**

**We demand that the University of Victoria reaffirms Palestinians' right to resist and right of return.**

**We demand that the University of Victoria publicly support Palestinian academics and cultural institutions directly without requiring them to partner with Israeli counterparts as an explicit or implicit condition for said support.**

**We demand that the University of Victoria follow through on its professed principles of decolonization.**

Despite various statements and actions of Indigenous solidarity with Palestine, the University of Victoria's failure to affirm goes against the University's own "land acknowledgement" statement in support of decolonization, which should consistently include all Indigenous Peoples under colonial occupation. This includes the people of the Occupied Palestinian Territory— which has been legally recognized by the United Nations and International Court of Justice— and must include a recognition that Palestinians have a legal right to resist their occupation under international law. We call on the University of Victoria's administration to hold true to the principles of their "commitment to implement core local, national and international responsibilities and calls to action that support the rights and sovereignties of Indigenous Peoples" as stated in the *UVic Strategic Plan*.

### **5) MAKE CAMPUS SAFE**

**We demand that the University of Victoria administer no charges or academic penalties on protesting students, faculty, and staff.**

The university should publicly support Palestinian academics and cultural institutions directly without requiring them to partner with Israeli counterparts, or their Zionist support groups, as an explicit or implicit condition for said support.

**We demand that the University of Victoria keep police off our campus.**

The police contribute to an environment that is unsafe for and directly harmful to BIPOC and other visible minorities.

**We demand that the University of Victoria create an action plan for the safety of Palestinian students and their allies on campus.**

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