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InterActions Palestine Statement

At a time when we should be focused on establishing a heliocentric view of identity that sees us all fighting to protect life on this planet and whatever miracles we may find in our solar system, we continue to find our institutions of higher learning entrenched with the interests of warmongers, war criminals, and human rights violators. The UC has failed to call for a ceasefire or review its investments and support of Israel's war effort. The UC has spent over \$30 billion towards genocide. No longer can we, as students and staff, stand behind our University contributing to the demolition of dozens of educational institutions in Palestine. Our work as educators is compromised when we stand by those who kill children, students, teachers, and administrators. It compromises our values when our research is used to whitewash a land, and erase a people's cultural and historical heritages and histories from the face of the Earth. We cannot sit idly by while our University resources continue to contribute to apartheid and genocide, the murder of thousands of her students and teachers, and the massacre of tens of thousands of children and their families. How can UCLA keep its motto, Fiat Luxe, Let there be light, when the administration attempts to obfuscate, deny, and conceal the violence being committed in collaboration with our administration? Let there be shame.

The UCs is supposed to be a place of education and research to improve life for all. So why is our University of California investing in the destruction of Universities, and the killing of Palestine's academia? 10,000 students. 400 teachers. Obliterated by bombs made by our country, endorsed and funded by our Universities. 286 schools, and every university that remained in the country, were decimated in acts that directly link our students to the deprivation of their students. 39,000 students denied the opportunity to finish their exams and secondary education, all to make way for a Zionist ethno-state, another settler-colonial state, established upon genocide and apartheid.

We denounce antisemitic speech, and anti-Jewish hate with the same fervor as when we denounce Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian speech. The intentional destruction of schools, and murder of students, teachers, and their families demands our urgency. So we stand with those educators and students organizing for justice in Palestine and with Palestinians. We stand as part of the ongoing legacy of educators and students who've organized for peace, an end to war, an end to genocide, the dissolving of state sanctioned murder and violence, and the abolition of apartheid. We stand alongside our peers protesting, and using lawful, peaceful disobedience to advocate for our institution's divestment of funds from BlackRock and weapons manufacturing.

During these protests, students peacefully demonstrated, painted murals, cooked together, and engaged in dialogue with the community in support of Palestine, among other non-violent activities. Entering the Solidarity Encampment meant agreeing to camp agreements, and promising to consider safety and security while peacefully assembling. Safety extended beyond normal

considerations, to include food allergies, Covid-19 precautions, and preventions to protect the immunocompromised among the collective.

On the night of Tuesday, April 30th, and into the morning of May 1st, the peaceful protest was thrown into chaos when violent counter-protesters committed horrible life-threatening assaults. After days of escalating Zionist harassment, a group of several hundred Zionist fascists attacked the UCLA student encampment. When they originally appeared, these counter-protesters in support of Zionism and its political project, played videos of babies crying and being killed, and recordings of other violent and gruesome acts as psychological torture for protesters. Later, more appeared in waves of armed mobs of masked individuals. They committed chemical weapon attacks, hurled gas canisters, sprayed pepper spray, and threw fireworks and other projectiles into the encampment of students. They fired at least 6 large fireworks and hurled blocks of wood into the camp, rushed the barricades, shot tear gas at students, sprayed bear mace and pepper spray, hit us, our students, our peers, our colleagues, our professors, and family members. These individuals, advocating Zionism, sexually harassed protesters and followed them in groups to and from restrooms and dorms, threatening sexual assaults, rationalized as a just response to their support of Palestine and Palestinians. In one attestation, a demonstrator shares that “30 counter protesters surround me and tell me that I am a “terrorist” who “deserve[s] to be sexually assaulted,” and that they could kill me and they know people that “would make it go away.”

Dozens of peacefully assembled community members were hospitalized for serious injuries, including blunt force trauma to the head, brutalized as part of a terror campaign that lasted for over seven hours. During the three hours of escalating violence, students called 911 and various public safety hotlines, only to see UCPD, CHP, and private security watch the assault on our community, but do nothing to stop it. All while Chancellor Gene Block watched from inside Royce Hall, making no effort to fulfill his responsibility to protect students. Despite knowing in advance of the mob attack, Chancellor Block and the UCLA Administration allowed the violence to ensue, in the hopes that those assaulting our community would do what they wanted: destroy the encampment, or at least that the resulting violence would provide a pretext for police intervention. The attackers were allowed to leave the scene freely, and none are known to have been arrested. This disgusting abdication of duty to protect students from a violent Zionist attack, atop their refusal to divest from genocide, apartheid, and the violence of war criminals, is evidence enough of their stance on these matters, and an endorsement of the mob violence that almost cost the lives of our students, faculty, and peers.

The following night, UCLA admin seized on the attack as a pretext to invite UCPD, LAPD, LA Sheriff's Department, and the CHP to attack students and destroy the encampment. Cops assaulted the encampment for over 5 hours, during which, they shot flash bang grenades, tear gas, and rubber bullets at protestors, causing head trauma and broken bones, and arrested at least 132 students and faculty, among them members of our union. These police forces, supervised by Administrative

Vice Chancellor Michael Beck, spent hours brutalizing and detaining protestors. In another testimony, a participant writes:

We tried to leave. THEY TRAPPED US INSIDE. They shot rubber bullets as well as **tackled, stepped on, and choked** students and faculty into detainments. We were **forced to crawl our way out through bushes as cops brandished weapons**, at every single exit. They arrested dozens of students, zip tied them and held them captive in Dodd Hall *for hours*.

In similar vignettes shared by students, one pointed to how cops further endangered the community: “They drove around at high speeds plowing through a crowd that barely made it to disperse on time. They hit steel chairs that flew into folks nearby.” Another vignette of the incident describes how police forces kettled protesters: “They basically caged them in and students tried telling them to let them disperse. They intentionally trapped them.” Rubber and pepper bullets were fired directly at students from a dangerously close range; one student ended up in the emergency room with a bruised lung as a result of a rubber bullet striking him directly in the chest. Students suffered a variety of other injuries, including concussions and bruising, as a result of this University-sanctioned police violence. These violent tactics were taught to our local police forces by the Israeli Defense Forces, currently enacting human rights atrocities in Palestine.

Our collective memory is not so short-lived that we have forgotten the spectral shadows of those killed during the Jackson State Massacre, and its violent targeting of Black students and children by the University and State; and the Kent State massacre in response to student-led protest against the Vietnam war. Our community has again been left ruptured and asunder as our fundamental right to free speech and political expression of our members— editors, authors, and reviewers— continues to be severely attacked by our university leadership.

Recent events have reaffirmed that the police have contributed extensively to harm during these instances. On April 30 they watched fecklessly as they watched vigilantes let loose incalculable harm to our students, peers, and our colleagues. But in the wake of this violence, University administrators have further entrenched police forces on-campus, and left UCLA feeling like a heavily surveilled, carceral state some students have described as a ‘police-state.’ This university militarization is further exacerbated by the unilateral appointment of Rick Braziel as UCLA’s ‘cop czar,’ accountable only to the Chancellor. His hiring has been seen as an escalation of police presence on-campus that has led to harassment for those expressing solidarity with Palestinians, or opposition to Zionism and the ongoing genocide. Before transitioning out of his role, Chancellor Block unilaterally created the so-called “Office of Campus Safety,” reporting directly to his office, and headed by former Sacramento Police Chief Rick Braziel. Braziel was appointed overnight in a process that lacked transparency and input from the campus community, and seems to regard student protest as inherently illegitimate and illegal by default. Braziel is a professional scandal-management consultant for police forces, who appears during colossal failures in law enforcement

responses. Braziel has a long history of whitewashing police violence. He was the lead investigator in the review of the police response to former LAPD Officer Christopher Dorner. His decisions ensured that no officers were held accountable for the decision to use explosives to kill a suspect instead of seeing them detained, charged, and prosecuted. He was a member of a team reviewing the riots in Ferguson Missouri and the St. Louis County Police Collaborative Reform Initiative, signing off on the violent police response to quell public outcry of police violence. He also served as one of the nine people selected to review the police response to the Uvalde massacre. He endorsed their professional negligence, and failure to protect those children killed by the mass murderer.

UCLA is now teaming with police forces, enhancing the generalized sense of anxiety and surveillance smothering our campus. Braziel, and his contracting of several different security companies, including those with murky reputations, now govern our campus under their loose confederation of police officers and security guards. Braziel has turned UCLA into police state, where Black and Brown students cannot walk on campus without being stalked and harassed by police officers demanding we identify ourselves while threatening violence if we question or refuse. On Monday, May 6, cops arrested almost 50 students and grad workers for simply gathering on campus and pinned many with unfounded conspiracy charges. On the afternoon of June 10, UCLA students gathered to recognize and memorialize the tens of thousands of Palestinians killed by Israel during its genocidal campaign in the Gaza Strip, before being kettled, beaten with batons, and shot at close range with rubber bullets. They paused only to snatch individual students out of the crowd and bundle them away for arrest. For those who witnessed the disappearing of protesters, it felt like a public kidnapping. Had students simply been allowed to express themselves, there would have been no threat to safety; Braziel's heavy-handed police response was the cause of dozens of injuries.

The UC Regents have now even passed a policy to callously crack down on free speech of students, faculty, and staff. The repression and violence we experience at the hands of the University of California and her Regents show us a direct parallel between the repression of the student movement worldwide and Palestinian lives on the ground. The violence enacted in our names directly ties us to our Palestinian siblings and schoolmates; and our counter-work affirms our shared resistance alongside them as well.

It is evident that our University has failed to protect UCLA students and the community, and has washed its hands of its duty of care. The University has remained steadfast in its commitment to prosper upon the graves of our neighbors' children, not caring if they see us killed in these halls in their efforts to continue to do so. We are reminded daily of the atrocities and horrors committed against Palestinians by the hands of IDF soldiers and illegal Israeli settlers, inspired by Zionist demagoguery. We uplift the demands of the UCLA encampment, and of the Black and brown graduate workers who have led this fight over the years to demand cops off our campus

immediately. We stand behind demands for decolonizing the university, and abolishing our contributions to the military industrial complex. We reject the presence of university backed police and the attempts to repress our student movement for the complete and unconditional liberation of Palestine through university-sanctioned state terror. We will not allow these crimes against humanity to be done in our names, and with our resources, without collective resistance.

Our Demands

1. **Divestment** of all UC-wide and UCLA Foundation funds from companies and institutions that are complicit in the Israeli occupation, apartheid, and genocide of the Palestinian people.
2. **Disclosure** of all UCLA Foundation and UC-wide assets and funding sources, including but not limited to contracts, grants, gifts, and investments. These should be presented in a publicly available, publicly accessible, perpetually up-to-date database.
3. **Amnesty** for all academic employees, students, student groups, faculty, and staff who face disciplinary action or arrest due to involvement in or support for the Palestine Solidarity Encampment. UCLA must cover all medical bills related to injuries sustained by academic employees, students, faculty, and staff at or as a result of their support for the encampment.
4. **Cops Off Campus:** The immediate removal of LAPD, LASD, CHP, and other “external” law enforcement from campus; the dissolution of UCPD and reallocation of those funds to support students, especially Black, brown, and Palestinian students; the exploration, development, and implementation of non-carceral, democratically controlled forms of securing community safety; the abolition of policing on campus; and the immediate termination of Rick Brazier and dissolution of the Office of Campus Safety.
5. **A codified, grievable commitment to protect free speech** and political expression on campus, including protests and expressions of support for Palestine and the Palestinian liberation struggle.
6. **Boycott:** Sever all UC-wide connections to Israeli universities, including study abroad programs, fellowships, seminars, and research collaborations, and UCLA's Nazarian Center.
7. **Transitional funding** that empowers researchers to reject employment from funding sources tied to the military or to oppression of Palestinians. The UC must provide centralized transitional funding to workers whose funding is tied to the military or foundations that support Palestinian oppression.
8. **Julio Frenk's immediate resignation** or his full-throated support for divestment from genocide and apartheid in Palestine.