

The Wadham College Middle Common Room (Wadham MCR) stands in solidarity with the people of Palestine, acknowledging the horrific violence and systematic destruction that they have experienced. The ongoing attacks against Palestinian people have been termed a genocide; Francesca Albanese, a UN expert on human rights, wrote a report titled 'The Anatomy of Genocide' in March, and stated the following:

*“Following nearly six months of unrelenting Israeli assault on occupied Gaza [...] **There are reasonable grounds to believe that the threshold indicating the commission of the crime of genocide...has been met.**”*¹

The University of Oxford and Wadham College are financially contributing to this by ignoring demands to divest from Israeli occupation and settler colonialism.² The University's complicity began many decades ago, with Oxford alumni being instrumental in colonialist and imperialist projects, not only in Palestine but across the world. Given Wadham SU's commitment to human rights advocacy, and the long legacy of anti-apartheid politics, it would be hypocritical not to express our support for Palestinians. As Nelson Mandela said, *“We know too well our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians”*³.

Across Israel, Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, Palestinians are legally treated as second-class citizens. They are unable to move freely within and between the Occupied Territories, and have limited political freedom to participate in the system that governs their lives and futures, to name only a couple of examples.⁴ Israeli forces continue their systematic attacks on domestic life as well as education, culture and industry in Gaza and the West Bank. These attacks constitute an attempt to erase the Palestinian people, and prevent them from being able to return and rebuild their lives. In February, Amnesty International declared that Israel has failed to take even the bare minimum steps to protect Palestinians from genocide, in line with the guidance of the International Court of Justice.⁵

1 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/03/1147976>

2 <https://palestinecampaign.org/university-complicity-database/> - search 'University of Oxford'.

3 http://www.mandela.gov.za/mandela_speeches/1997/971204_palestinian.htm

4 <https://www.btselem.org/apartheid>

5 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/02/israel-defying-ici-ruling-to-prevent-genocide-by-failing-to-allow-adequate-humanitarian-aid-to-reach-gaza/>

Since October 7th 2023, at least 34,789 Palestinians have been killed. This number includes more than 14,500 children,⁶ amounting to 1 in 50 children in Gaza having been killed or injured.⁷ Over 78,204 people have been injured, and more than 8,000 Palestinians are missing.⁸ Many of these figures are months out of date and the death toll is likely much higher. Alongside this, 10,000 Palestinians are still being held hostage in Israeli prisons, at least 250 of whom are children, and 130 Israeli hostages remain held in Gaza. We call for the release of all the hostages held by both sides. We further condemn the violence on October 7th in which 1,139 Israelis were killed by Hamas fighters. Any and all loss of life must be mourned, and should not be used to justify the further suffering of more innocent civilians.

In January, Al Jazeera reported that not a single school or university in Gaza remained open.⁹ Over 100 journalists have been killed in Gaza, including 4 Israelis,¹⁰ with 16 injured and 15 arrested.¹¹ 496 workers in the healthcare sector have been killed, 1,500 injured, and 309 arrested. Just days ago, Adnan Al-Bursh, the head of orthopaedics at Al Shifa Hospital, was tortured to death in his cell, having been in captivity for more than four months. At least 18 Gazans have been killed through intentional neglect in Israeli custody since October 7th.¹²

The situation continues to deteriorate. By the time this statement passes, it will likely be out of date. At the time of writing, Israel has taken control of the Gazan side of the border with Egypt and is proceeding with an assault on Rafah, a previously

6 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2023/10/9/israel-hamas-war-in-maps-and-charts-live-tracker>

7 <https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/news/media-centre/press-releases/one-in-50-of-gaza-s-children-killed-or-injured-in-six-months-of->

8 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2023/10/9/israel-hamas-war-in-maps-and-charts-live-tracker>

9 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/24/how-israel-has-destroyed-gazas-schools-and-universities>

10 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2023/10/9/israel-hamas-war-in-maps-and-charts-live-tracker>

11 <https://cpi.org/2024/05/journalist-casualties-in-the-israel-gaza-conflict/>

12 <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/prominent-gaza-doctor-dies-israeli-prison-2024-05-02/#:~:text=Medical%20groups%2C%20including%20the%20World.data%20on%20attacks%20on%20aid>

designated safe zone, with bombs, tanks and helicopter fire as well as the beginnings of a ground invasion.¹³ This region of south Gaza is a 64 km² area, within which as many as 1.4 million Palestinians are seeking refuge, with nowhere else to go.¹⁴ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has previously expressed that he plans to invade Rafah regardless of a hostage deal, contradicting claims that the goal of an extended offensive is to return the hostages to their families.¹⁵ This being said, the condemnation of the Israeli government and its actions does in no way extend to all Israeli citizens and students.

The extent of civilian casualties show that this conflict is not simply a war between Israel and Hamas. These attacks are indiscriminate and are enabled by the complicity of Western governments and institutions, including the UK, which have armed and enabled the IDF (Israeli Defence Forces) since long before October 7th. Since 2008, the UK government has licensed arms worth £574 million to Israel.¹⁶

Wadham MCR calls for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. Our MCR calls on the Israeli government to restore access to food, water, power and medicine in Gaza, and ensure that Palestinians have access to urgent humanitarian aid. We also condemn the attacks on Palestinian civilians in the occupied West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem by settler paramilitaries.

Furthermore, Wadham MCR supports the demands of the Oxford Action for Palestine (OA4P) encampment,¹⁷ as of May 6th 2024, and calls on the University of Oxford and Wadham College to implement them as soon as possible. Our demands are as follows:

1. Disclose University-wide assets (including those of Wadham College specifically)

- a. Annually disclose a comprehensive account of University-wide assets, including direct and indirect investments, land holdings, donations, and grants

¹³ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/7/israel-takes-control-of-rafah-crossing-gazas-lifeline-whats-going-on>

¹⁴ <https://www.npr.org/2024/03/15/1233158434/rafah-gaza-population-crowding-israel-hamas>

¹⁵ <https://www.politico.eu/article/israel-going-to-invade-rafah-regardless-of-hostage-deal-says-benjamin-netanyahu/>

¹⁶ <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9964/CBP-9964.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://twitter.com/OxAct4Pal/status/1787448006138003963>

2. Divest from Israeli genocide, apartheid, and occupation

- a. Immediately divest University-wide direct and indirect holdings in all arms companies.
- b. Publicly pledge to completely divest University-wide direct and indirect holdings in all companies that are complicit in Israeli genocide, apartheid, and occupation of Palestine within the next 5 years.

3. Overhaul the University Investment Policy

- a. Expand the ethical restriction on arms manufacturers to cover direct and indirect investments in all arms and military technology companies.
- b. Add an ethical restriction to the Investment Policy on direct and indirect investments in companies that are complicit in Israeli genocide, apartheid, and occupation.
- c. Integrate community stakeholders in ethical investment review processes to ensure that all investment decisions adhere to justice-based guidelines.

4. Boycott Israeli genocide, apartheid, and occupation

- a. Suspend all current, and pledge not to enter into future, institutional relationships with Israeli universities as long as Israeli genocide, apartheid, or occupation is ongoing.
- b. Suspend research, career, and procurement partnerships with companies and institutions that are complicit in Israeli genocide, apartheid, or occupation.

5. Stop banking with Barclays (including the termination of Wadham's own business relationship with Barclays¹⁸)

- a. In light of Barclays bank's extensive investments in companies supplying Israel with weapons and military technology, the University of Oxford and its Subsidiaries (including Wadham College specifically) must stop banking with Barclays.

6. Support the Palestinian-led rebuilding of education in Gaza

- a. Publicly commit to supporting, through financial and material means, the Palestinian-led rebuilding of the twelve universities that have been completely, or in part, destroyed by Israeli aggression in the last year.
- b. Establish and support a long-term task force composed of staff, students, and relevant Palestinian community members who will recommend how best to meet the call issued by Palestinian higher education institutions to rebuild the higher education sector in Gaza.
- c. Publicly commit to allocating resources in the interim to support scholars at risk in Palestine through, but not limited to, exchanges, joint projects, academic fellowships and partnerships, and scholarship programmes.

¹⁸ https://admin.wadham.ox.ac.uk/media/documents/Trustee_Report_2022_-_final_-_blocksigned.pdf p. 3.

We support these demands in rejecting and fighting against the complicity of this university in the unfolding genocide. We call on other colleges' student bodies at the University of Oxford to support these demands in solidarity with Palestinians.

Wadham MCR also urges the University of Oxford and Wadham College to proactively engage in negotiations and refrain from escalating the current situation. We condemn all instances of antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of discrimination that have occurred on campus in relation to this conflict. We urge the University of Oxford and Wadham College to actively prioritise the well-being of all students, prevent outside agitators and media harassment of students and staff, and refrain from intimidation tactics, excessive police involvement and targeted disciplinary actions.

Finally, we call on the University to condemn the recent antisemitic abuse directed at participants in a vigil hosted by the OA4P encampment. These were all initiated by unaffiliated agitators, and we urge the University, in line with its safeguarding policy, to condemn physical threats towards students, and to take measures to ensure that students are protected physically and emotionally.

This statement was voted in the week May 14th and May 21st by Wadham MCR, which worked in tandem with a working group that included Wadham students from a range of backgrounds, and the Wadham SU.

WELFARE RESOURCES

Wadham-specific welfare:

- <https://www.wadham.ox.ac.uk/current-students/student-welfare>
- Email peersupport@wadham.ox.ac.uk

Other resources:

- <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare>
- <https://cst.org.uk/report-incident> - reporting of antisemitic incidents
- <https://tellmamauk.org/submit-a-report-to-us/> - reporting of Islamophobic incidents
- *Instagrams:* [@oxfordpalsoc](#) (student-run Palestine society), [@oxford_jsoc](#)

(student-run society for Jewish students), [@oxforduni_isoc](#) (student-run society for Muslim students)

Sources

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/02/israel-defying-icj-ruling-to-prevent-genocide-by-failing-to-allow-adequate-humanitarian-aid-to-reach-gaza/>

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<https://twitter.com/OxAct4Pal/status/1787448006138003963>