

Detroit's WSU Palestine Solidarity Encampment Raided and Shut Down by Police

At 6:00am cops rushed in breaking up the peaceful protest which is demanding the disclosure and divestment of Wayne State University from entities with investments in the State of Israel

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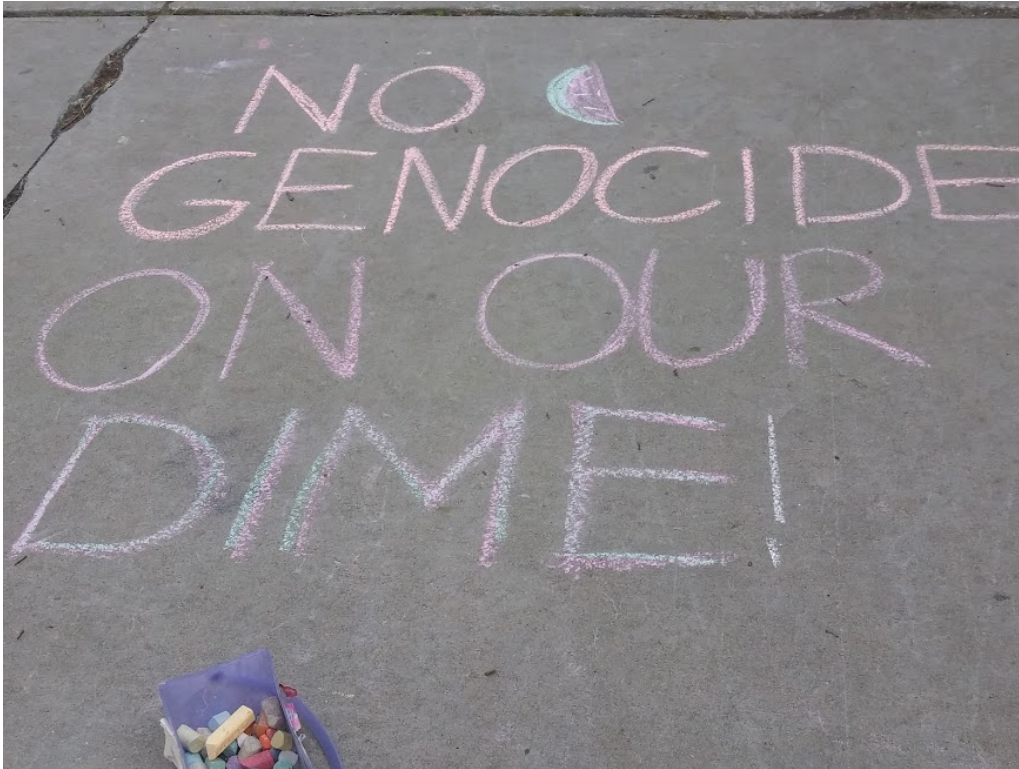
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After seven full days of an encampment at the center of Wayne State University in Detroit, campus police raided and removed the encampment which has demanded the complete divestment from corporations which have interests in the State of Israel.

The encampment began with a demonstration on Thursday May 23 starting on Woodward Avenue and West Warren, which is the location of the WSU Welcome Center.

Hundreds of students, faculty and community members then marched west on Warren on to the campus where the encampment was constructed right across from the Undergraduate Library (UGL). For seven days, the Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and their allies maintained the solidarity camp around the clock providing food, water, medical services along with educational workshops and cultural presentations.

The Palestine solidarity activists issued nine demands to the university administration including full disclosure of financial ties with the Israeli regime; divestment from these holdings; a public statement decrying the genocide in Gaza; reaffirm students' First Amendment rights to protest and dissent; protect students and faculty members advocating for Palestine from all forms of hostility and conduct; a formal inquiry into the harassment they experience; accurately represent the city of Detroit and call for a ceasefire; offer financial and legal help for Palestinian students who are on a visa; and offer programming for Palestinians and people who have been evacuated from Gaza.



WSU students say 'No Genocide on Our Dime'

During the course of the one-week encampment, campus administrators attempted to mislead the public through false statements made to the press.

Newly appointed President Kimberly Andrews Espy claimed that the students had refused to hold talks with administration. The fact of the matter is many of these demands were made months ago. The Student Senate had passed a resolution demanding divestment earlier in the year.

Moreover, it has been exposed that the WSU Police have collaborated with the Israeli state by sending its personnel to train alongside the Zionist security forces in 2019. The Student Senate had requested that links between the settler-colonial government occupying Palestine be immediately halted.

An article published in the WSU campus newspaper, the South End, [said the following](#):

"The Student Senate passed Resolution 2324-24, which called for Wayne State's Police Department to break their ties with the Israeli government, an explanation as to why the department received anti-terrorism training from said government, and further cultural sensitivity training, on Thursday at its last general body meeting of the semester. In 2019 WSU Chief of Police Anthony Holt visited Israel for a 'seven-day training regimen' funded by the Israel Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, according to an article written by Holt in The Detroit Jewish News."

This same article goes on to cite the 2019 report in The Detroit Jewish News saying:

"The purpose of the trip with the Law Enforcement/Federation Security Detroit delegation was to receive training on 'coping with terrorism threats, anti-Semitism as a global terror threat, connection between community and security/emergency forces,

terror in the State of Israel from the perspective of a senior commander in the field, Judaism in the diaspora, simulation exercises and numerous other critical points of discussion,' the article said.'"

Chief Holt, when asked recently about the trip by the South End, denied that it was a training exercise. He told the newspaper that there was no training during the trip. He said the delegation went there to enjoy Israel by sightseeing and relaxation.

Nonetheless, he did not address the obvious questions as to why The Detroit Jewish News would make such a claim if it was not true. Various United States police departments have engaged with Israeli security forces for a number of years.

WSU Administration Destroys Peaceful Encampment Following Nationwide Pattern

Despite the peaceful character of the encampment, the WSU administration refused to recognize the legitimacy of the protest action. Negotiations between the SJP and others demanding the divestment from the settler-colonial regime now occupying Palestine, with the university administration, failed to make any progress.

These negotiations involving the WSU Board of Governors and the student representatives stalled while no effort to address the nine demands of the protesters were put forward by the administration. Several days prior to the raid, a WSU administrator approached the encampment telling students that they would negotiate with two representatives of the group if they agreed to dismantle their protest site. The students refused to dismantle, saying they would not conduct negotiations in private.

Therefore, during the early morning hours of May 30, police in riot gear invaded the encampment. Palestine solidarity activists were attacked, dispersed and 12 were arrested.

Muslim women had their hijabs forcefully removed by the police. U.S. Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, who has been on campus several times during the encampment, challenged the police and the administration for their dismissive attitudes and brutality.

Since May 28, WSU President Espy had ordered all students and staff to work remotely. All campus buildings were locked as police and private security personnel roamed the campus in attempts to intimidate the students.

By 10:00am May 30, news of the raid had spread prompting a rally at the corner of West Warren and Second Avenue. Students and faculty members spoke denouncing the brutal actions of the administration and the police.

Several faculty members spoke out saying they supported the encampment. One professor in the Medical School was told by his supervisors that if he continued to post messages on social media in solidarity with Palestine he would be terminated.

Later hundreds of activists travelled to the Detroit Detention Center on Mound Road where they picketed calling for the immediate release of those arrested earlier that morning. After nearly 10 hours in detention, the Palestine solidarity organizers were released.



WSU Black Student Union delegation to Palestine solidarity encampment

Later in the evening a tribunal was held at Trinosophes located in Eastern Market. Student activists from the encampment at the University of Michigan and Wayne State University testified to the links between these higher educational institutions and the State of Israel. They also recounted the vicious actions of the police in Ann Arbor and Detroit in tearing down the encampments and filing charges against the Palestine solidarity activists.

Hundreds attended the tribunal reflecting the widespread interest in the issue. All of the witnesses stated emphatically that the encampments were peaceful and that the only violence was the brutality inflicted on students, faculty members and community people staffing the protest activities in Ann Arbor and Detroit.

These developments at both the U-M and WSU follow the same pattern which have been enacted across the U.S. It has become quite clear that the administration of President Joe Biden, the majority of politicians in the House of Representatives and the Senate along with the Justice Department, are coordinating the destruction of Palestine solidarity encampments on campuses.

Tristan Taylor, a co-founder of Detroit Will Breathe (DWB), which led the mass demonstrations in the aftermath of the police execution of George Floyd beginning in late May 2020 and continuing for many months, spoke to the rally held after the destruction of the WSU encampment and the arrest of 12 people. Taylor said that the ruling class in the U.S. fears the Palestine solidarity movement because it poses a challenge to imperialism. He condemned the Biden administration and the Democratic Party for its repressive measures carried out against students.

Nakia-Renee Wallace, also a co-founder of DWB and alumni of WSU, said that the diverse character of the one-week encampment provides an example which is commendable. "When I witnessed the energy, boldness and tenacity of the encampment it made me proud.

I understand why they cannot let this stand. They miscalculated because we do not need the encampment to continue the rallies. All of the students should be released and there should be no repercussions.”

The struggle to end the genocide in Gaza has become a major issue in this presidential election year. Biden’s arming of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and his refusal to call for a ceasefire, has cost the Democratic Party tremendous support.

A campaign to vote “uncommitted” in Democratic presidential primaries has its origins in Michigan. As a result of this initiative, more than 101,000 voters cast their ballots as uncommitted on February 27. This movement is being replicated on a national level.

Despite the repression carried out against students and faculty surrounding the Palestine solidarity actions, the movement is continuing to grow exponentially.

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