

Letter from UC San Diego Faculty to the Students of the Gaza Solidarity Encampment

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Over 60 UC San Diego faculty members across several departments have written and signed a letter addressed to the students who were at the Gaza Solidarity Encampment, which was raided on May 6. The letter details their reactions to the encampment, the subsequent raid, and affirms their stance of solidarity with the current UAW Local 4811 strike.

“This letter is part of the chorus of voices coming from across campus that stand in solidarity with the student movement toward a liberated Palestine,” said the authors of the letter.

The full letter submitted reads as follows:

“Palestine itself is a kind of moral litmus test for the world.”
— Dr. Angela Davis, quoting the late Black feminist poet June Jordan

Dear Students:

While your academic achievements at UCSD are commendable, they are far eclipsed by the profound and historic impact of your actions in creating the Gaza Solidarity Encampment. As professors, we recognize that no exam or academic endeavor could ever measure up to the moral litmus test you passed by standing with Palestine. We are so proud of you.

Over the past 7 months — as the administration stifled classroom discussion of the Israeli genocide of Palestinians in Gaza, launching investigations into professors who dared teach about it — you’ve been busy educating yourselves and each other. You’ve listened to anti-racist Palestinian and Jewish voices disentangle the racist modern political ideology of Zionism from the ancient ethno-religion of Judaism. You’ve learned to situate the current genocide within the larger Zionist project to colonize Palestine, which has been underway for over a hundred years. You’ve studied the history of the 1948 Nakba, which enabled the creation of the settler state of Israel through the ethnic cleansing of 750,000 Palestinians and the destruction of more than 500 Palestinian villages and towns. You’ve done the painful work of bearing witness as 14,500 children have been slaughtered, 85% of Gaza’s population has been displaced, over 100,000 people have been killed or injured, famine has spread, and all of Gaza’s universities and 24 of its 36 hospitals have been destroyed. You’ve critically dissected dominant narratives that paint Palestinians as either terrorists or human shields, seeing those descriptions for what they are: deeply racist and Islamophobic justifications for genocide. In other words, unlike many of your professors, you did your homework.

Then, you did something none of us had managed to do: You forced the entire campus to pay attention to Palestine.

We watched in admiration as your encampment brought together a multiracial and interfaith coalition of students, faculty, alumni, medics, and spiritual and community leaders to share food, dance, teach, read, pray, and protest. As educators, we appreciated how people inside the encampment weren't motivated by grades or external praise but by a sense of responsibility to each other and to the people of Gaza. Some of you shared that, for the first time, you didn't have to worry about having enough to eat. No racist cops were allowed inside the camp. You cared for and kept each other safe. You made Library Walk come alive — a liberated zone.

Your actions stand tall in the historical tradition of student protests. In the 1960s and 70s, students walked out of classes (and dragged their professors along) to demonstrate against the racist and immoral war in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. To the students screaming, "stop killing our Asian brothers and sisters!" and "end the genocide!" university administrators unleashed the riot police. Soon, they created campus police departments and "diversity" offices — two arms of everyday policing so normalized today on college campuses around the country — to criminalize dissent, perform inclusivity, and prevent protests of that magnitude from ever happening again. In the 1980s, students confronted police and administrators as they protested apartheid and demanded universities divest from South Africa. The end of the Vietnam War and the end to apartheid in South Africa would not have happened without those insurgencies on campuses and in the streets around the world.

These history lessons tell us you are on the right side of history and that Palestinian liberation is on the horizon.

History also teaches us that those who stand against a racist and deadly status quo are often met with the very forms of oppression they are protesting against. We saw this clearly when Chancellor Khosla unleashed 200 police officers in riot gear to campus on May 6th to wake you in the cruelest way. We saw officers beating you with batons, spraying you with pepper spray, and tackling you to the ground. We saw officers pointing guns in your faces at point-blank range. Those rubber bullets could have blinded you. They could have killed you. The university's brutal response to your peaceful protest reflects the alarming magnitude of its investments in the very assets from which you've been urging it to divest. The UC system invests \$32 billion in weapons manufacturers and other companies that benefit from the Israeli occupation and genocide — nearly one-fifth of its overall assets. Chancellor Khosla evidently would rather traumatize and risk killing his own students than divest.

As your professors, we owe you more. Academia socializes us to behave hierarchically. It tells us knowledge is transmitted from faculty to students, behind classroom walls, never the other way around or beyond. In ways loud and subtle, it trains us to devalue Palestinian stories. Your beautiful encampment showed us otherwise and offered a glimpse that a different university is possible. With its violent dismantling, many of us who have been disciplined for so long comfortably fell back to business as usual. We returned to the tally of attendance, grades, and deadlines. The resumption of normality is a continuation of the violence of May 6, a violence we participate in, perhaps unwittingly but at our own peril, and which we are becoming aware of now. You have every reason to feel betrayed and distrustful, but know that the unlearning that your encampment sparked in us is a slow but continuing process. Both students and faculty face precarity rooted in a university system that prioritizes profit over people and education. Your encampment has not only highlighted these issues but also extended an invitation to stand in solidarity. In response, faculty and staff at all 10 campuses have joined with students in forming a Palestine Solidarity Collective in articulating statewide demands for disclosure, divestment, delinking, reinvestment, police abolition, amnesty, and correcting the narrative, which has been sent to all chancellors and the systemwide president.

Now, as UAW 4811 members across the University of California have authorized a historic strike in defense of workers' rights to protest for Palestine, solidarity is more crucial than ever. We commit to honoring the picket line and doing everything in our power to ensure that the university:

calls for a ceasefire and commits to help rebuild the universities of Gaza which have all been destroyed with its complicity.

ensures amnesty to all those who participated in the Gaza Solidarity Encampment.

implements a full boycott of the Israeli apartheid regime.

divests from Israeli apartheid, occupation, and genocide.

We will mobilize our peers to push for cops off campus. We will educate ourselves, our colleagues, and our students on anti-Palestinian, anti-Muslim, and anti-Arab racism. And finally, for having created unsafe conditions on campus and for inciting racist violence against you, we will demand the removal of Chancellor Khosla and all other administrators involved.

Students, you have pushed the moral litmus test of Palestine to the heart of the university, and it is our honor to stand alongside you.

In gratitude and solidarity,

Alex Stewart, Continuing Lecturer, Anthropology

Amanda Batarseh, Assistant Professor of Literature

Ameeth Vijay, Associate Professor

Amy Kennemore, Lecturer for Latin American Studies Program

Amy Sara Carroll, Associate Professor of Literature and Literary Arts

Ana Maria Alvarez, Associate Professor, Theatre + Dance Department

Andrea Mendoza, Assistant Professor of Japanese and Comparative Literature

Andrew Devereux, Department of History

Andrew Jolivéte, Professor and Chair, Ethnic Studies/Director Native American and Indigenous Studies

Andrew Whitworth-Smith, Continuing Lecturer

Anna Joy Springer, Associate Professor, Department of Literature/Writing

Anthony J. Harb, Assistant Professor, Communication

Ariana Ruiz, Assistant Professor, Department of Literature

Ben Cowan

Brandon Som, Associate Professor, Literature

Branka Hrvoj-Mihic, Lecturer, Anthropology

BT Werner, Professor at Scripps Institution of Oceanography

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Daniel Vitkus, Professor, Literature Department

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Fernando Domínguez Rubio, Associate Professor

Jac Jemc, Teaching Professor in Literature

Jade Power Sotomayor, Assistant Professor in Theatre and Dance
Jin-kyung Lee, Associate Professor, Literature
Jody Blanco, Professor of Philippine and Latin American Literature
Joo Ok Kim, Associate Professor of Literature
José I. Fusté, Assistant Professor
Joseph Hankins, Associate Professor in Anthropology
Julia Sloane, Lecturer
Leslie Meyer, Lecturer for Synthesis Program at Seventh College
Lia Friedman, Librarian
Lilly Irani, Associate Professor, Communication
Lily Hoàng, Professor of Literature and Interim Director of the MFA in Writing
Luis Martin-Cabrera, Associate Professor, Literature
Niall Twohig, Lecturer for Warren College
Patty Karam Ahn, Associate Teaching Professor, Communication Dept
Pepe Rojo, Lecturer for the Communication Department
Ricardo Dominguez, Chair and Professor, Department of Visual Arts
Rihan Yeh, Associate Professor, Anthropology
Ross Frank, Associate Professor, Ethnic Studies
Roy Perez, Assistant Professor of Ethnic Studies
Samuel Museus
Shaista Aziz Patel, Assistant Prof of Critical Muslim Studies, Dept of Ethnic Studies
Sherice Clarke, Assistant Professor, Education Studies
Simeon Man, Associate Professor of History
Stephanie Richards, Professor of Music
Tage Rai, Assistant Professor, Rady School of Management
Theresa J. Ambo, Assistant Professor of Education Studies
Tricia Gallagher-Geurtsen, Lecturer, Education Studies
Troy Araiza Kokinis, Lecturer, Latin American Studies and Sociology
Vanessa Ribas, Associate Professor of Sociology
Verónica Martínez-Matsuda, Associate Professor of History
Wendy Matsumura, Associate Professor of History
Yen Le Espiritu, Distinguished Professor