

May 4, 2024

Dear Faculty and Staff of the Department of Asian Studies,

As you may know, the students of the University of British Columbia Vancouver community in solidarity with the pro-Palestinian encampment have begun their initiative of the encampments for university campuses across North America to divest from Israel and its genocide of Gazans in Occupied Palestine. We, the students of UBC Asian Studies, in our support for the Vancouver Palestinian Movement's encampment, on the stolen and ancestral lands of the Musqueam people, in its fight for a free Palestine, are demanding the UBC administration and our Department to:

- **Divest** from companies involved and complicit in Israeli apartheid and the oppression and genocide of Palestinians.
- **Boycott** Israeli institutions, universities and systems of knowledge production and discontinue the AMNE archaeological excavation in stolen Palestinian land.
- **Condemn** the genocide and scholasticide in Gaza.
- **Ensure Campus Safety** from law enforcement, police and institutions that historically threaten BIPOC students and other marginalized communities disproportionately more.
- **Reaffirm** the Palestinian right to resist and their Right to Return.

We invite the students, staff and faculty to stay abreast of updates via the social media handles of the [People's University for Gaza at UBC](#) and the [Palestinian Youth Movement](#) here for updates and calls for supplies.

Over the last seven months of ongoing genocide, starvation, and scholasticide in Palestine, the UBC administration has silenced and censored the voices of pro-Palestine protestors. We have seen barriers set up to delay and deter events focusing on Palestine and newly devised policies which prevent departments, offices, and students from issuing statements of solidarity with Palestine. It is becoming clearer that at a time when active oppression, violence, and destruction of tangible and intangible cultures are being perpetrated with impunity, the silence of the academe is an act of complicity. A number of our colleagues have joined the encampment at a great cost to their safety, security, privacy, and their practice. Many more of us wish to aid, support, and call the attention of the Department to the urgency of this crisis. We are therefore soliciting the meaningful support from our staff, students, and faculty in this endeavour.

We have, in the past months noted that the safety of protestors within the Free Palestine movement has been compromised inside university campuses in the world, and even within our UBC campus. We find this suppression of the voices of and for Palestine unconscionable and unacceptable, and we unanimously condemn the disruptions of peaceful gatherings and encampments on campus. Our Department holds pride and respect in the acknowledgment of First Nations peoples, and uses their knowledge and decolonizing practices in our research and teaching. Many of us, graduate students and faculty members alike, are researchers of imperialism and decolonization. We believe that asking for accountability from UBC falls in line with our academic commitment to studying and gaining academic credibility from themes of colonization, imperialism, and the violence of occupation across Asia. In this vein, we wish to

extend our learnings to support Palestine and the protestors; we urge the members of our faculty and staff to join us.

We remind faculty and staff that students have historically led protests and transformative change at UBC, from the petitioning for a campus in [1922](#) to the Faculty Club “invasion” of [1968](#) to anti-APEC protests in [1997](#). We invite you to help protect and support students by showing up in solidarity and by voicing your commitment to the right of students to protest. In the present climate, the UBC community and student body require safety and protection. The presence of police on campus goes against the commitment to a safe campus; it reproduces racialized marginalization and institutionalized violence in the name of peace-keeping.

We call upon our faculty and staff of the Department of Asian Studies community to:

- **Speak** about the demands of the UBC encampment (and BDS movement) by releasing statements (in personal or collective capacities), by using their social media presence (if applicable), by including these demands in agendas of the meetings of the Department’s Transformative Committees—Sustainability Initiatives Committee, Anti-Racism Committee/Racial Justice, Indigenous Asia Committee, and by including the ongoing genocide and occupation of Palestine in their pedagogy.
- **Forward** our statement of solidarity to colleagues within and outside the department.
- **Release** a statement of solidarity on the Asian Studies Departmental web page (such as the ones released by the [Institute of Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Social Justice](#) or the [Centre for Climate Justice](#).)
- **Become** involved in whatever capacity they are able with the encampment– by providing resources and supplying or donating books to the [Librarians for Palestine](#) stall, organizing teach-ins, and being present at the encampment.
- **Demand** that the UBC administration disclose all financial ties with Israel and divest from the Israeli occupation and ongoing genocide.
- **Ensure** students are safe by showing up at the encampment and by telling the administration to remove law enforcement from the UBC Vancouver campus.
- **Be aware** of the specific vulnerabilities of different groups of our student community, especially international students whose voices are suppressed and censored by their precarious status as foreign nationals.

We stress that police presence only serves to make campuses more unsafe for students, especially those asserting their right to protest peacefully. Globally, we watch as administration-sanctioned disruptions to peaceful Free Palestine encampments are leading to severe police brutality on students in the encampments. We condemn this manipulation of representation and the violence on the bodies of those who are committed to this movement against imperial violence. We believe that such a cause can only be sustained by prioritizing our academic community and its safety over all else. As part of academic communities—as scholars, researchers, mentors, staff, and instructors in various capacities—we all believe that we have a duty and responsibility of care toward our peers, students, and colleagues. We are hopeful that members of our department will extend this care toward those amongst us who are becoming involved with and standing for the demands of the People’s University of Gaza at UBC.

Students

Ying Han, MA student
Sneha Roychoudhury, PhD student
Lavanya, MA student
King Kwong Wong, Graduate student
Anonymous, Graduate student
Skyler Wolf, MA student
Kurtis Hanlon, Sessional Lecturer, PhD candidate
Fahad Naveed, PhD student
Farimah Mahmoodi, Graduate student
Siyun Pan, PhD student
Midorikawa, MA student
Anonymous, PhD student
Jinsung Kim, PhD student
Parboti Roy, PhD student
2 graduate students' names and positions have been redacted

Faculty and Staff in Support

Naveena Naqvi, Assistant Professor
Anonymous, Alumnus, Staff
Anonymous, Assistant Professor
Kai, Lecturer
Fuyubi Nakamura, MOA Curator, Asia + Assistant Professor
Ayaka Yoshimizu, Assistant Professor of Teaching
Christina Laffin, Associate Professor
Rumee Ahmed, Professor
Adam Barnett, Student Programs Coordinator
Kiran K. Sunar, Assistant Professor
Anonymous, Faculty
Anonymous, Staff
Anonymous, Sessional Instructor
Sunera Thobani, Professor
Nesrine Basheer, Assistant Professor of Teaching
Hasan Siddiqui, Assistant Professor
Anonymous, Lecturer
2 faculty members' names and positions have been redacted