

DEMANDS

Members of the EUI Community gathered in Piazza Shireen Abu Akleh (formerly Piazza San Marco), with the EUI Working Group on Palestine, together with the students of the Florence Universities

May 15th, 2024

Dear EUI Governance,*

**(Executive Committee, Academic Council, Presidents' Office, Departments, EDI, Financial Office, Reps, and any other office herein concerned)*

We are EUI researchers joint together with students from the various Universities of Florence. The genocide of the Palestinian people continues still today as Israel invades Rafah, the last safe refuge for over one million and a half people. In light of this catastrophe, we must act.

On the 76th anniversary of the Nakba, May 15th, the Giovanni Palestinesi D'Italia organisation called on all students in Italy to mobilise and occupy their universities in solidarity with Gaza. Inspired by the student encampments launched across American universities the past week, and in solidarity with all students who have been occupying their universities in other cities across Italy, we are encamped in Piazza San Marco, renamed Piazza Shireen Abu Akleh, because of the urgency of the situation in Rafah. We will stay encamped until each of our respective universities (EUI, UniFi & SNS) address our joint demands.

This letter is addressed directly on behalf of the wider EUI Community, through the EUI Researchers' Union & Working Group on Palestine, to the entirety of the EUI Governance. In April 2024, we had already communicated a [Petition For an Inclusive & Anti-Apartheid EUI](#) to you, having received over 200 signatures from within our community, which has not yet received any official acknowledgement or response. We know that the Executive Committee created a task force to include Palestinian Scholars at Risk, but there has been no transparency as to the progress of this work. On May 15th, the Academic Council released a statement finally calling for a ceasefire, which we welcome, but we are embarrassed that the EUI still cannot refer with specificity to the ongoing invasion of Rafah, the genocide in Gaza, the occupation of Palestine, and the apartheid regime of Israel.

In light of this context, we are writing this letter because we demand more action, more quickly and more transparently. We are advancing three basic requests:

- I. **The creation of a dedicated task force**, composed of professors & other representatives of the academic community, and committed to negotiating the following four demands presented in this document in detail; in a clear timeframe; with tangible and actionable outcomes:

- 1) *Silence is complicity: stop genocide, occupation & apartheid*

We demand a public statement from EUI, arising out of a participatory process led by this taskforce with the community, asking with specificity for a call for ceasefire and a stop to the

ongoing invasion of Rafah, the genocide in Gaza, the occupation of Palestine, and the apartheid regime of Israel. To continue to only refer to 'a crisis in the Middle East', as done by our Academic Council in their letter May 15th as well as by the EUI President in November 2023, is not only inaccurate, but an orientalist and racist trope which removes the conflict from its context and conveniently avoids the nuance which our prestigious institution of international law and politics is so proud to advertise.

2) *Boycott, Divest, Sanction: stop the arms trade with Israel and all military exploitation of academic research*

Our universities must each disclose their assets, divest from, and cut ties with any organisation complicit in genocide. Further details of how we think EUI might better comply with BDS are outlined below. The onus however is on the requested EUI taskforce, in cooperation with an independently funded position within the administration, to first clarify a common aim and motivation in this demand, and to then investigate whether EUI is complying fully with the BDS movement, finally also transparently disclose their findings.

3) *Stop scholasticide: support schools & universities in Gaza*

There are no more universities in Gaza - students of all ages and displaced scholars need the support of our universities' infrastructure and funding. Florence must become an open city to host and support education and research in Gaza in any way possible. The EUI requested taskforce should in a participatory

manner investigate into and deliberate how best to support schools & universities in Gaza, in cooperation with the other schools and universities in Tuscany, Europe and beyond.

4) *Protect academic freedom & the right to protest: anti-zionism
≠ anti-semitism*

We demand that EUI enacts policies to protect the rights of Palestinian, Arab, Muslim, and pro-Palestinian students to research on, and make legitimate protests in support of, Palestine. The requested taskforce should work together with the EDI and larger community, in an intersectional manner, taking into account Palestinian, Islamic, Jewish, Israeli and other concerned voices, in collectively drafting a definition of antisemitism which does not prejudice against the legitimate critique of the settler-colonial project of Zionism or the state of Israel and its breaches of international law - and reflecting on other policies which might better protect academic freedom in this context.

Please find further detail on each of these four demands below.

- II. The creation of a **position within the EUI administration** dedicated to investigating its assets, agreements and relationships, **to ensure that EUI is fully informed in complying with the BDS movement in full, and to then disclose** the findings publicly to the aforementioned task force and to the wider EUI community.

III. That the updated work of the aforementioned points is periodically shared with the EUI community **with full transparency**, even if still in progress, so we can know that the demands stated in this letter are being acknowledged and responded to.

Please find below our four demands in more detail:

1) Silence is complicity: stop genocide, occupation & apartheid!

We demand a public statement from the academic senates and councils of each of our respective universities which recognise and call for a ceasefire, and an end to Israel's invasion of Rafah, as well as to genocide, occupation and apartheid - which are the underlying infrastructures on which the ongoing invasion of Rafah is based: without the dismantlement of this legal bureaucratic inequality, the long-lasting peace and right to self-determination of the Palestinian people cannot be ensured. These statements by our universities must be unequivocal and specific: it cannot simply refer to a 'humanitarian crisis in the Middle East', but rather make narrow mention of Palestine, Gaza and Rafah.

In the context of the humanitarian emergency imposed on Palestinians, especially in Gaza, the call for an immediate ceasefire and end to the genocide, occupation and apartheid is urgent. As state institutions, universities have a public duty to clearly position themselves against anyone committing or aiding in war crimes or crimes against humanity, genocide, apartheid, as well as the context of illegal settlements.

The Palestinians' human rights and internationally recognized right to return must be upheld. Anybody experiencing direct physical harm and/or psychological trauma has a legitimate right to resist the perpetrator/s.

Access to basic needs must be provided at all costs, for example, infrastructure for food, medical care, hygiene, drinking water, energy supplies, and shelter, as has been called for by the UNRWA. Being universities of Florence, we have a responsibility to hold the Italian government to account to support the UNRWA and other humanitarian aid, as well as to cease its own relationships with organisations complicit in the ongoing genocide.

2) Boycott, Divest, Sanction: stop the arms trade with Israel and all military exploitation of academic research!

Our Florentine universities, each in their respective relationships, must disclose their assets, divest from, and cut ties with any organisation complicit in genocide. All political and economic means available must be utilized to end the apartheid, genocide and occupation. Our universities should be especially concerned in investigating that their research and funding does not fall complicit to dual use for military purpose.

The European University Institute can comply with BDS by:

a) Creating a position within the EUI administration dedicated to investigating its assets, agreements and relationships, to ensure that EUI is fully informed in complying with the BDS movement in full, and to then disclose the findings publicly to the aforementioned task force and to the wider EUI community.

b) Investigating into & transparently disclosing its assets and relationships and hiring practices, including direct and indirect investments, donations and grants (e.g. for research exchanges, teaching opportunities and staff positions, existing scholarships and partnerships with events such as the State of the Union);

c) Boycott of the Horizon Europe EU research fund, of which 1/5 is granted towards Israeli academic institutions used in research in the security and defense industries for the development of weapons, including drones used in Gaza and Pegasus surveillance spyware. The EU-Israel Association Agreement should be suspended in the face of Israel's genocide;

d) Boycott the ECPR Council until it releases a statement condemning Israel's killings of civilians in Palestine, both in Gaza and the West Bank, and demanding an immediate ceasefire, similar to those issued in light of the previous violations of human rights on behalf of academics in Europe and beyond;

e) Investigate into how the European Journal of International Law, hosted by EUI, was able to organise a symposium with the Israeli Defense Forces, and thus providing a legitimating platform to an occupying military force implicated in violation of international law;

f) Boycott Meta Platforms and Microsoft Corporation by stopping their partnerships in events and funding organized at EUI, like the State of the Union conference happening between 23-25 May 2024, as well as the Academic Scholarships Programme on Innovation Research & Expertise (ASPIRE). Meta Platforms is censoring the pro-Palestinian content on their platforms, while Microsoft Corporation is participating in development of surveillance services used for the oppression of Palestine people, such as border control software, provision of cloud services and military software, AI, programming, computing courses for IDF soldiers, supporting services for the illegal settlements in occupied Palestine;

g) Boycott Bertelsmann, another partner of the EUI's State of the Union (2024), who has stated that they condemn the Hamas attacks and anti-semitism in Germany, without also condemning the invasion of Rafah and the ongoing genocide perpetrated by Israel; as well as repressing people's right to protest by further conflating antiemitism and anti-Zionism. Further, Bertelsmann has declared the unwavering support for the State of Israel through funds, investments and public statements.

The Scuola Normale Superiore can comply further with BDS by:

In the last months a mobilisation within the Scuola Normale Superiore has led to the adoption of a resolution by the Academic Senate and has allowed channels of dialogue to be kept open between the Scuola's decision-making bodies and the mobilised students and administrative staff.

We recognise these steps and the formal commitments made by the SNS decision-making bodies. However, we believe that these commitments must be followed by more concrete actions, taken as a matter of urgency. We are also unsatisfied with the SNS refusal to question its relations with universities and institutions directly involved in war economies, including to the detriment of the Palestinians. Therefore, in addition to the demands expressed by this general mobilisation Unifi-SNS- EUI, we ask the Scuola Normale Superiore:

a) The inclusion of a civil clause within the Statute that provides for an effective, transparent, binding and shared control system to evaluate the use made of research and of the collaborative relations between the university and the war industry. We call for the participation of students in the drafting of the clause and the shared regulations.

b) The creation of an ethical evaluation committee, including student representatives, to evaluate the use of research, with the aim of preventing potential war and dual use of research and technology. We also call for the committee to assess agreements with universities, institutional bodies and industries that may be implicated in the violation of international law.

The University of Florence can comply with BDS by:

Agreeing on the creation of a dedicated taskforce at its Academic Senate meeting on May 21st, to investigate its own relationships, assets and agreements – to be better clarified by the UniFi community, which is currently looking into these points in a participatory manner, in the following days.

3) Stop scholasticide: support schools & universities in Gaza!

There are no more universities or schools in Gaza: students of all ages and displaced scholars need the support of our universities' infrastructure and funding. Florence must become an open city to host and support education and research in Gaza in any way possible.

Palestinian universities and schools have been destroyed, preventing thousands of young Palestinians from enjoying the basic right to education; universities must do their utmost to support programs that accommodate students, researchers and displaced scholars under conditions of danger and discrimination, such as Scholars at Risk, and take other concrete actions that support the continuation of education and research activities in Palestine. Universities in Florence could provide zoom links and digital resources, physical spaces of their campuses, access to their libraries and services, funding etc.

Each university's 'scholars at risk' initiatives must be issued through a public call, and make a concerted effort to include, support & fund Palestinian scholars to undertake research and study programmes across the board (e.g. Traineeships / Bachelor's / Masters / PhD / Postdoc / Fellowships / Staff positions / administrative positions). Scholars at risk programmes must also reflect on logistical questions and obstacles such as visas, costs, residency permits, health care, supporting families - and also ensure that this funding is granted to those most in need through a transparent application process, ideally including Palestinian perspectives and that of our respective groups working around Palestine.

Finally, there are Palestinians already in Florence who could use our support, access to our programmes, campuses, services, and more financial aid - as well as help in navigating their own logistical obstacles such as residency rights and health care.

4) Protect academic freedom & the right to protest: anti-zionism ≠ anti-semitism!

We demand our universities enact policies to protect the rights of Palestinian, Arab, Muslim, and pro-Palestinian students to research on, and make legitimate protests in support of, Palestine and against the occupation, genocide and apartheid - as well as critiques of the Israeli state.

Our universities should adopt an anti-Zionist definition of antisemitism, inspired by others such as the [Jerusalem Declaration definition on antisemitism](#), which builds on the IHRA definition, but clarifies that the critique of Israel is not per se antisemitic. The Jerusalem Declaration is however imperfect - it has been critiqued as 'orientalist', and does not

address the core problem of the IHRA definition: the silencing and erasure of Palestine and Palestinians. A definition of antisemitism is important to distinguish between actual cases of antisemitism and instances when accusations of antisemitism are instrumentalised and levied against those working on Palestine. This definition is a matter of Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity, and should be drafted by each respective university community in a diverse participatory manner, which speaks to the intersectional identity and power dynamics which play into who can speak on Palestine, without facing arbitrary accusations of antisemitism or repercussions to their jobs, positions, or reputations.

Expressing criticism against the state of Israel or against Zionism do not constitute anti-Semitism; institutional definitions of anti-Semitism must be changed so that they cannot be used to censor and punish those who bring criticism to the state of Israel and Zionism as a settler-colonial project; universities must protect the academic freedom of their researchers, as well as the right of all of their members - staff, admin and students alike - to express their opinions, to assemble, to demonstrate and to protest. This is all the more important in the context of increasing police violence being used across Italian cities and beyond to censor and attack peaceful protests in solidarity with Gaza.

We, the students and scholars of the joint universities of Florence, stand together on the anniversary of the Nakba at our encampment in Piazza San Marco, renamed Piazza Shireen Abu Akleh, until these demands are not only heard by each of our universities' academic senates and councils, but until we are assured that action will be concretely taken to translate these demands into tangible and meaningful policies and effects.

*EUI Researchers, with the Students of the Florence Universities - Piazza
Shireen Abu Akleh - May 15th, 2024!*

As an appendix, we end by stating our firm support for the Giovani Palestinesi Italia (GPI) in their demands:

- 1) To Italian universities, through and in the context of the CRUI, to denounce the Israeli military aggression on the population of the Gaza Strip as well as express solidarity with the Palestinian population by providing assistance with all possible means to support the university communities and all those affected;
- 2) To Italian universities, through the CRUI, the immediate termination of all university agreements with universities and companies located in Israel and the total boycott of the Israeli academic system, strong arm of the colonial occupation apparatus and fundamental basis of support for the political-political complex Israeli military in the Occupied Palestinian Territories;
- 3) To the Italian Government, through the MUR, the immediate termination of the Cooperation Agreement in the field of Industrial, Scientific and Technological Research and Development between the Government of the Italian Republic and the Government of the State of Israel of 2000, so that it is limited to the minimum the complicity of the Italian Government in the war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated by the State of Israel against the Palestinians.

4) To the Ministry of University and Research, to establish a fund to finance support measures for Palestinian students, researchers and teachers so that they can carry out their activities at universities, institutions for higher artistic, musical and dance education and Italian research institutions .