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FLORENCE STUDENT ENCAMPMENT FOR PALESTINE DEMANDS AND POLITICAL DOCUMENTS BOOKLET

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INTRODUCTION



On the 15th of May 2024 in Florence on the anniversary of Nakba, students, researchers, and workers from the European University Institute, the University of Florence, and the Scuola Normale Superiore launched the Encampment for Palestine in Piazza San Marco, renaming it Piazza Shireen Abu Akleh - in living memory of the American-Palestinian journalist killed in the Occupied Palestinian Territories by the IDF.

This booklet collects the Four Demands prepared by the students and researchers from the European University Institute, in collaboration with the University of Florence and Scuola Normale Superiore's students and sent during the Encampment to their respective institutions. And the written commitments received by the President of the European University Institute Patrizia Nanz.

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. The mobilisation continues, and all updates can be found on the Instagram account **@studentxlapalestina_fi** and **@altsou.conference**. This action is part of a transnational intersectional movement led by students, and it is an inter-university cooperation.

“History is the diaries of
weapons,
written on our bodies.”

Don't write history as poetry
Mahmoud Darwish



THE FOUR DEMANDS

**WE, EUI RESEARCHERS,
TOGETHER WITH STUDENTS
AND RESEARCHERS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORENCE (UNIFI)
AND SCUOLA NORMALE SUPERIORE OF FLORENCE (SNS)
SENT THESE DEMANDS TO OUR RESPECTIVE INSTITUTIONS
ON THE 15TH OF MAY**

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.

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.

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

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.

**Use this QR Code to download the
full text (courtesy by Alternative
State of the Union Task Force**



ACTIONS OVERVIEW



9-DAYS OF ENCAMPMENT

A transnational action

The Florence Students Encampment followed the path of the hundreds of Encampments across the world. What makes the Florence case unique is that instead of being set up within a University, it's been launched in a public square and - answering the call of the Giovani Palestinesi in Italy - it was conceived and organised by students from three different universities.



DAILY PUBLIC ASSEMBLIES

Organizing and mobilizing

Every morning at 8.30 AM and every evening after dinner the participants in the camp held public assembly to increase the pressure on each university with regards to the 4 demands and the urgency to call for an immediate ceasefire to stop the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

DIE-IN, SEAT-IN, TEACH-IN

Multiple direct actions

Every day students from the University of Florence organised the "Passeggiata Rumorosa" within their university, an artistic performance in Piazza Non Una Di Meno (Piazza SS Annunziata) was organised on the 20th of May, a 5-hour long demonstration was held on the 21st of May in front of University of Florence during the session of the Academic Senate was held. Last but not least, researchers and students interrupted the State of the Union event in Palazzo Vecchio and did a die-in in Badia Fiesolana and in Piazza della Signoria.

ACHIEVEMENTS WITHIN EUI

THE REPLY FROM THE EUI PRESIDENT

This letter was sent by
President Patrizia Nanz
on the 22nd of May



The President
Patrizia Nanz

Florence, 22 May 2024

To the Members of the EUI community gathered in Piazza San Marco

Thank you for your letter and document. I appreciate your engagement and the time and effort you have taken to articulate your concerns and demands regarding the urgent situation in Gaza and the broader context of Palestinian rights. I recognise the deep distress and the strong calls for action expressed by our community.

As a university, the EUI encourages every member of our academic community to engage in dialogue on pressing political and social issues. We should therefore support the right to exercise free expression and foster the space to speak out about all issues, as long as it is done with intellectual rigour and respect for the dignity of all. This also means we should be ready to listen to opinions that might make us uncomfortable. Freedom of expression extends to petitions and peaceful demonstrations, which can lead to further dialogue and joint solutions.

I understand the urgency of the issues raised and the need for a thoughtful and thorough response. However, given the complexity and scope of your demands, I believe it is essential to proceed with caution to ensure that any actions we take are well-informed, feasible, and effective.

Since your demands are made jointly with the students of other Florence universities, I have invited other Tuscan rectors to meet at the Badia. However, the EUI will also proceed independently, engaging in dialogue, investigation and action. In this regard, whilst some demands require time for consideration and dialogue, I can already report the following:

- I have established a **task force committed to facilitating dialogue on the demands** outlined by the student and researcher movement. This task force, which currently consists of professors suggested by researchers and students (Monika Baar, Deirdre Curtin, Kristin Fabbe, Nicolas Guilhot, Martijn Hesselink, Stephanie Hofmann, Alain Lempereur, Fabrizia Mealli, Sarah Nouwen, and Arnout Van De Rijt) and representatives of the postdocs, researchers and students (Giselle Bernard, Lala Darchinova, Miriam Eladly, Aurora Hamm, Revital Madar, Niall O'Shaughnessy), may be expanded to include other members from the academic community. The task force has already met and begun investigating how best to address the four demands. It will meet again soon to develop a timeline and plan for communicating findings and progress to you and the EUI community.

- The university commits itself to conducting a comprehensive **mapping of the EUI's assets**, agreements, relationships, and hiring practices, including investments, donations, and grants, with particular emphasis on the Horizon Europe research fund, and the disclosure in full transparency of the findings. I welcome such an exercise as an opportunity for greater transparency for our own sake.
- At this stage, **Meta Platforms, Microsoft Corporation, and Bertelsmann** cannot be disinvited from the SOU 2024 event at the last minute. They might be available to engage in a civil dialogue with the researchers if requested. This decision aligns with the EUI commitment to academic freedom. However, we will ensure that for invitations for future similar events, the due diligence assessment will include an assessment of links to armed conflict.
- Substantial progress is being made on the **EUI's response towards scholars at risk** and its reinforcement will remain a priority in the coming period. The EUI considers it its responsibility to protect scholars at risk as a core part of its mandate and it is currently assessing its capacity to host scholars at risk in a proper and sustainable manner. Opportunities currently being explored include (funded) participation in Master's and PhD programmes, enabling Palestinian students and early-stage researchers of Gaza to continue university education remotely, opportunities for post-doc researchers and trainees at risk. The EUI also intends to continue engaging with the Italian universities through the Scholar at Risk Network in Italy and with the CIVICA programme and it also plans to request the European Commission for coordinating action and funding to support scholars at risk, similar to EC-funded programme "**Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions4Ukraine**" (MSCA4Ukraine). The EUI welcomes the expertise and suggestions from petitioners for other potential activities.

This document only lists the actions that can be responded to in the short term or with immediate effect. Other demands (such as the public statement, anti-discrimination policies, or the adoption of a definition of antisemitism) require more time for consideration and dialogue.

I deeply value the engagement and advocacy that you have demonstrated. Your dedication to these critical issues is commendable, and I am committed to working collaboratively with you and the task force to address your concerns. Thank you in advance for your patience and understanding as we navigate these complex issues and strive to take meaningful and effective actions.

I am convinced that this dialogue, grounded in thoughtful reasoning and respect for the diversity of our community members will make the EUI stronger.

Best regards,



Patrizia Nanz

RESPONSE TO THE EUI PRESIDENT

In the picture: die-in organised by the
Encmpment during the State of the Union
2024



This is the reply to President Nanz's letter sent on the 3rd of June by 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.

Dear President Nanz, dear members of the Demands Task Force for an Inclusive & Anti-Apartheid EUI, Thank you for your letter 22/05, and to those of you who made time to come support us at Piazza Shireen Abu Akleh during our 10-day encampment, of which the unique power was the collaboration jointly between the EUI, UniFi & SNS together with the wider community of Florence. We stopped our encampment because our three respective universities acknowledged our joint demands, and committed to beginning to address them. The University of Florence issued a statement after its Academic Senate meeting 21/05, approving the motion drafted by our encampment, calling for a ceasefire and denouncing the scholasticide in Gaza. The UniFi has also made a commitment to investigate and disclose its assets through an internal Ethics Committee in order to comply with the BDS movement. Further, the Scuola Normale Superiore COSMOS Research Centre issued a statement 17/05, in support of the freedom of expression and protest on Palestine.

Our encampment further jointly protested the State of the Union 2024, both on EUI campus, and at Palazzo Vecchio, and in parallel, we hosted our Alternative State of the Union, in which we held an event on two of our demands: supporting Palestinian scholars in light of scholasticide in Gaza and protecting academic freedom - through which we already began to gather and harmonise knowledge, which will be useful towards our collective goal of creating a 'Toscana Aperta' that can stand united in the face of the ongoing scholasticide in Palestine. We are writing now in response to your letter, as we have not yet received any action or communication on the promises therein - and the mere acknowledgement of our demands is not enough - we need to see rapid concrete action and their meaningful implementation, as the attacks on Rafah are ongoing right now, and urgent measures need to be proportionately taken. While our encampment is finished, we are continuing to hold regular assemblies every Wednesday evening at Piazza Shireen Abu Akleh, in order to preserve the collaborative spirit between our communities, and to hold our institutions accountable for acting on our demands.

We welcome the initial willingness to open dialogue demonstrated by President Nanz and see the creation of a task force as a crucial first step towards tackling the questions that we as a University must ask ourselves in light of the ongoing assault on Rafah. We want to emphasise that we are seeking to open a discussion inside and beyond the EUI, and so we are dismayed by the current lack of open communication and refusal to dialogue demonstrated by parts of our own faculty, such as by the Academic Council. Silence is complicity, and the shutting down of debate is oppressive. The refusal to engage substantively and in earnest with our demands - which have arisen from multiple open academic events and inclusive participatory processes within our community - as well as the EUI's lack of transparency, are deeply concerning and shameful for an Institute that places inclusivity, intellectual curiosity and challenge among its core values.

Open Dialogue is fundamental to any University, and transparency is the minimum that is to be expected of a public institution. We agree with President Nanz when she wrote in The Guardian:

"Whether or not one agrees with the students' demands, they are right to take administrators to task when they ask for transparency about their university's financial and corporate ties. This should be standard practice and not a discussion prompted by a crisis."

It is time to move from words to action and we urge President Nanz and the task force to actualise responses on the pressing concerns of the EUI community raised in the Demands Letter written at Piazza Shireen Abu Akleh.

We expect that the task force starts this process by clearly:

- (i) communicating a narrow roadmap with a participatory process which clarifies the task force's mandate in a set timeframe,
- (ii) committing to complete transparency with regular EUI Community-wide updates,
- (iii) committing to open dialogue that does not hide behind bureaucracy or dismisses certain points of contention from the start,
- (iv) holding the EUI and its departments accountable to its sources of funding and research partnerships,
- (v) taking the work over from us by organising participatory assemblies through which to include the students of Florence from our various institutions, and supporting our initiative for a Toscana Aperta (see more below) - it is not our job to implement these demands and continue to create community and academic spaces for gathering knowledge on them; it is yours.

Further, your letter makes reference to a mapping of EUI's assets, to supporting scholars at risk, and to our other demands being met with 'time and considered dialogue'. However, we have still not received any specific information on who will undertake this work, how, nor in which time frame. Regarding the commitment to the Scholars at Risk programme many questions remain unanswered: will there be an open and transparent call for applications for Palestinian scholars at risk to the EUI, and if so, when? Will the few Palestinian scholars already accepted for next year into EUI be funded and assured of other social welfare and insurance? How could the EUI use its material, financial and intellectual resources to support schools and universities in Gaza struggling to stay online and continue their activities? Other universities in Europe, such as Ghent University, are already acting by ending all ongoing institutional collaborations with Israeli universities and research institutions.

In light of conflated responses to our initial Demands Letter, we want to explicitly clarify that our critique and demands are in no way aimed at targeting individuals or specific research projects, but are rather aimed at the funding policies of institutions and their complicity in genocide.

For example, when we say that the EUI ASPIRE scholarship does not comply with BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement), as it is currently funded by Google, Amazon, and Microsoft - all companies which actively support the Israeli military in committing genocide - we are not intending to target individual recipients of this scholarship, or even the scholarship itself, which is meant to support Global South Scholars, a much needed initiative. Instead, to be clear, we are saying that the scholarship's source of funding does not comply with BDS - and the EUI could remedy this by still supporting Global South Scholars and protecting existing recipients while seeking to change the source of funding. In a similar vein, we are not targeting Israeli academics or scholars working in Israeli institutions: "Israele Fuori Dalle Università" is a call for all universities to end institutional relationships with organisations complicit in genocide, as well as those Universities which threaten the academic freedom of their own scholars in Israel and elsewhere. Conflating our structural critique with an attack against specific individuals shows a lack of serious engagement with our demands, and an intellectual dishonesty with the academic work we are doing to consolidate the knowledge necessary to realise our demands.

Our encampment was, and our movement continues to be, inclusive, diverse, and counts among it the voices of many Israeli, Palestinian, Jewish, Muslim and other concerned identities. We find ourselves tirelessly repeating that anti-zionism is not antisemitic, nor is opposing genocide, and that EUI will be a safer space for all therein once it can meaningfully distinguish between legitimate instances of antisemitism and false claims of antisemitism which seek to marginalise academic freedom of speech on Palestine, legitimate critique of Israel and the settler-colonial project of Zionism. This is why our final demand on protecting academic freedom explicitly asks the EUI to adopt an anti-zionist definition of antisemitism, as our encampment has faced several arbitrary accusations of antisemitism. Academic freedom and the right to protest are being threatened around the world and in our own city of Florence: earlier this week, 9 students and trade unionists were awoken at 6am and searched by the police in their homes, had their telephones and computers confiscated, and were brought to police headquarters for further interrogation. This was followed by another instance of police violence yesterday, 2 June 2024, at a protest organised by students from the encampment, which further injured a scholar.

These are clear attempts to intimidate peaceful students and activists through state repression. This is exactly why open dialogue is so important, especially in academic institutions that can help in de-escalating public discourse and engaging in these admittedly challenging questions in a productive manner. Our best way to prevent violence is through dialogue. We strongly condemn any attempts to silence our movement and ignore the suffering of the Palestinian people and the complicity of institutions like ours in it.

Our encampment at Piazza Shireen Abu Akleh is organising a joint series of events entitled Toscana Aperta: Demands Symposium Against Scholasticide in Gaza to take place this month, with an event hosted at each of our universities. We would like to invite you all to please join our Symposium, and can already share that our first event will be hosted at EUI on June 11th, from 14-17h (location TBD).

The aims of this Symposium are to establish a network across the universities and Gaza solidarity encampments of Tuscany, so as to collect and harmonise detailed and intersectional knowledge on each of our four demands, to bring Palestine into the University and therein to discuss the broader political role of Academia. We aim to release an output inspired by LSE's 'Assets in Apartheid' report, which will consolidate our initial demands letter into a more detailed report with knowledge on implementing our four demands harmonised between each encampment and universities of Tuscany, which could help to create a true Toscana Aperta against scholasticide, and which supports schools and universities in Gaza, while also protecting academic freedom in our local community.

We are grateful that President Nanz invited the Rectors of the Tuscan Universities to meet at the Badia Fiesolana - we would request that you please communicate a clear date to us, as well as an invitation to Piazza Shireen Abu Akleh and the collective of students of Florence to join this deliberative moment. We would happily place our Symposium in dialogue with this meeting and communicate our output there, as well as host an assembly of the different Tuscany encampments in parallel on our campus. In light of the past difficulties we have faced in our respective institutions to be heard, this would be an important moment of participation and transparency for the students & scholars governed by these gathered Rectors of Tuscany. It is by working together to create a Toscana Aperta that we can respond to this 'Open letter by Gaza academics and university administrators to the world', and do our part.

ACHIEVEMENTS WITHIN SNS

AN OPEN LETTER ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND PROTEST ON PALESTINE BY THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL MOVEMENT STUDIES COMMUNITY

The letter was published
on COSMOS website on
the 17th of May with
+100 signatures



As social movement scholars we express strong concerns about the growing trend to restrict the right of expression, critique, and protest in several countries in Europe. Especially in relation to pro-Palestinian protests, university administrations have called police to campuses, with ensuing use of intimidation and force by police, often in riot gear, [against peaceful protestors](#). Politicians of different parties have defamed students as well as members of the academic staff who have intervened in support of the right to protest, accusing them of supporting violence, while proposing new laws and regulations oriented to increase the means for political repression through the

expulsion of students and the firing of staff members. [Mainstream media and pressure groups have contributed](#) through law-and-order campaigns, supporting the calls for more and more restrictive legislation, [as well as launching smear campaigns](#) against individual protesters and scholars who have signed petitions for the right to free speech. [University administrations have in some cases used their power](#) to threaten or even suspend and fire employees exercising their right to freedom of speech, petition, and assembly, which must also be understood in relation to the proliferation of precarious and fixed-term university positions. Against this background, we feel it is our duty to warn against the effects of this authoritarian move on our society. Social movement studies have pointed to the importance of protests in the development of ideas and innovations, in building spaces of learning and exchanges, and in fostering critical citizens. A backlash against long-established freedoms of speech and assembly will have extremely negative effects on teaching and learning. As [entire fields of knowledge, from queer and gender studies to postcolonial studies, are under attack](#), it is all the more important to defend and promote critical and free research, as well as the rights of students and staff to engage politically without repercussions.

In increasingly difficult and tense times, it is crucial that universities remain places of open debate and experimentation. Student camps have traditionally been spaces of elaboration of knowledge and ideas. University administrations have a duty to protect free speech and protest rights. Political parties that claim to defend progressive and democratic values should uphold these fundamental rights and not subordinate them to governmental stances.

We are well aware of the polarization of the discussion of the current war on Gaza, and would therefore like to emphasize that the right to protest must be protected regardless of its position on this issue. However, restrictions in many locations are in practice selective and those who protest in solidarity with the people in Gaza are disproportionately subject to repression. The silencing of those voices by universities becomes especially puzzling and worrisome in the light of the complete destruction of the university system in Gaza. UN experts have even expressed concerns over a possible ongoing "[scholasticide](#)". Academia worldwide must not passively watch while an entire university system is destroyed.

Scientific Research Centers

COSMOS (Centre on Social Movement Studies, Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence, Italy)

Use this QR Code to read the full list
of scholars who signed the letter



ACHIEVEMENTS WITHIN UNIFI

THE VICTORY WITHIN UNIFI

On the 21st of May University of Florence approved the motion written by the students. The Academic Senate committed to issue a statement condemning the genocide, and to set up a working group to create a commission to evaluate all current agreements with institutions complicit in the genocide.



Use this QR Code to watch the 2-
minutes video account of the day



JOIN THE MOBILIZATION

PUBLIC ASSEMBLY IN THE SQUARE

01.

Students, researchers, workers meet every wednesday at 6.30 PM in Piazza Shrieen Abu Akleh (Formerly Piazza San Marco) for a pubic open assembly. Everyone is welcome.



TOSCANA APERTA: DEMANDS SYMPOSIUM AGAINST SCHOLASTICIDE IN GAZA

02.

The initiative “Toscana Aperta – Demands Symposium Against Scholasticide in Gaza and Palestine” is a follow-up to the Florence Encampment for Palestine, organised by students, researchers and workers from University of Florence, Scuola Normale Superiore and the European University Institute.

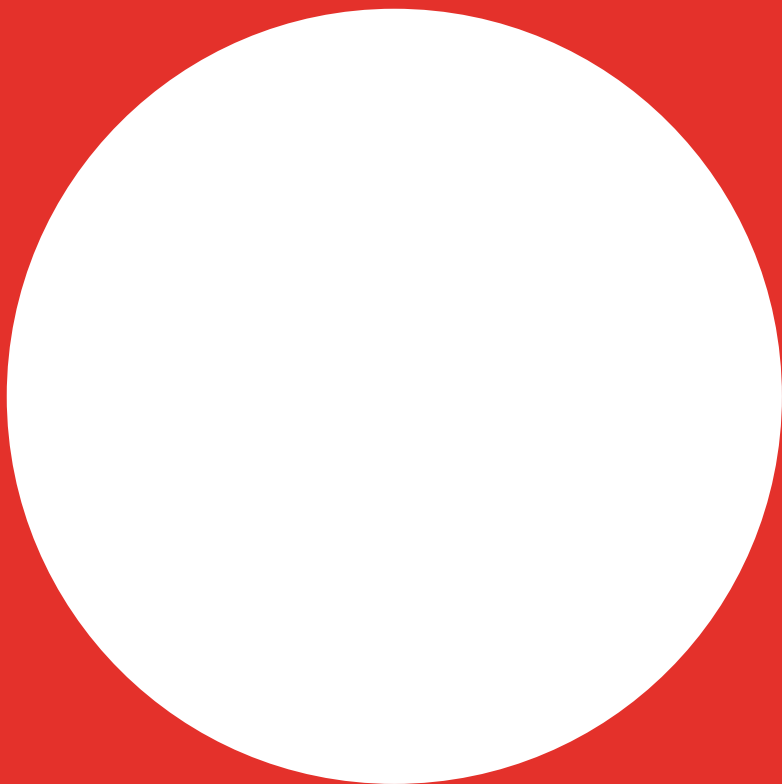
The events planned are:

- 11th June - EUI Session
- 18th June - University of Florence Session
- 20h June - Scuola Normale Superiore

ARCHIVE AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY

03.

The “archive and collective memory” project aims at archiving and building collective memory about the encampment and mobilisations in solidarity with Palestine occurring in Florence since the Spring 2024. The project can be understood as a form of “living knowledge”, rooted in a radical approach to archiving where it is the community itself that populate, curate, and develop the archive.



FLORENCE STUDENTS ENCAMPMENT

this is the version 1.0 of this booklet.
The initiative of the Florence Students
Encampment is part of the inter-university
initiative between European University
Institute, University of Florence and Scuola
Normale Superiore.



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