

Goldsmiths' Senior Management Team responses to Goldsmiths for Palestine demands

1 March 2024

Introduction

The document sets out the responses of Goldsmiths' Senior Management Team (SMT) to a set of demands issued by student-staff campaign group Goldsmiths for Palestine (GfP) in a letter on 20 February 2024.

We welcome the issues which have been brought, and thank the participants for the care and passion with which they have been raised, as well as the conduct of the occupation.

SMT deeply cares about the issues which have been raised, and continues to urge a focus on the incredible pain, suffering and loss which is being experienced and expressed. We would like to work with Goldsmiths for Palestine in pursuit of the demands set out. The format that follows sets out the demands of the group then SMT's responses. In summary, SMT would like to propose a collection of actions as follows:

- Teach-ins (programme of activities to be co-designed, supported by academic staff)
- Commitment to the University of Sanctuary principles, and to applying to become a University of Sanctuary
- Financial support to help the rebuilding of HE in Gaza, including increasing existing student scholarships from 2 to 3 (totalling a financial commitment of £50k)
- Building academic partnerships with Palestinian HE institutions
- Exploring the possibility of offering an on-campus and online space for peace and reflection, where people from across our community can come together for dialogue, performances, activities etc which are rooted in our relationships, of care and mutuality

SMT responses to demands

The below sets out SMT's responses to the demands made by Goldsmiths for Palestine. The format shows the demand by the group followed by SMT's response.

GfP demand 1

Goldsmith's SMT must issue a new statement calling for an immediate ceasefire, whilst condemning in no uncertain terms Israel's genocidal activities, the deliberate assassinations of students and university workers, and the destruction of Gaza's educational infrastructure.

GfP demand 2

The above statement must commit Goldsmiths to uphold academic freedom and freedom of expression as one of its core values.

SMT response 1 and 2

SMT called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in its statement on [16 February 2024](#), along with calling for the release of all hostages and urging all parties to push forward to reach agreement. Ending the war and finding meaningful peace must be the priority of all those in the region who have the power to bring about positive change.

The humanitarian tragedy unfolding in Gaza is devastating. The impact on the basic human right of education, as set out in multiple international definitions, is abhorrent. We are committed to supporting the rebuilding of these educational structures, spaces and capacity both in the region and through the scholarship and efforts of our community in London.

We recognize individuals or groups consider the actions of Israel to be genocidal and that others do not. We also recognise the legal aspect of this matter as shown by the case brought by South Africa to the International Court of Justice. We note that the [interim judgement handed down by the ICJ](#) found it did have jurisdiction, that there is a plausible case under the 1948 Genocide Convention, and that the Palestinian population in Gaza was at real risk of irreparable damage.

SMT completely supports the Court's statement that Israel "must take all measures within its power" to prevent acts of genocide and that a report on these measures should be submitted to the Court.

As a number of scholars and legal experts have noted, ICJ rulings on genocide are deeply complex matters which previous cases have shown can take years to resolve. Because of this SMT does not feel it is appropriate to provide an institutional statement formally recognising Israel's action as genocidal until such a time that the ICJ makes its judgement.

To be clear, we believe this position does not prevent us in joining with international voices in condemning the intolerable suffering of the people of Gaza while also condemning the Hamas terror attack on 7 October. All fighting must stop and all

hostages must be returned and those who hold power in the region must turn to peace rather than conflict.

We believe that this position is in keeping with Goldsmiths' protection of freedom of speech. As we have set out in previous statements, we are absolutely committed to academic freedom and freedom of expression and hope that the facilitation of recent demonstrations by our community and the depth and breadth of colleagues' scholarship help illustrate this.

In the debate over freedom of expression, our community must also remember that UK law sets out that freedom of expression is a right but not an absolute right, and may be restricted in some circumstances such as to prevent harm to others. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced [a helpful guide to freedom of speech](#) in relation to higher education in England and Wales. It has also provided [broader guidance](#) to help support understanding of this matter.

GfP demand 3

Unequivocally uphold students' right to protest, participate in walk outs, and demonstrate against apartheid, illegal occupation, settler colonialism, ethnic cleansing, and genocide and criticise the state of Israel; it must also unequivocally uphold the right of staff to support students who choose to utilise these rights.

SMT response 3

As set out above, we unequivocally support freedom of expression which is within the law, and our regulations at Goldsmiths. Our approach is to support all of our students and staff and at times this may see the College taking proportionate measures within our regulations as appropriate.

We understand the sensitivities over recordings and the impact this may have on individuals with specific personal circumstances. Our [CCTV policy](#) sets out the College's approach.

The Goldsmiths guidelines [Demonstrate safely and with respect](#) are not specific to any one issue and apply to all demonstrations. These guidelines are an important part of how we support our community and will not be withdrawn.

GfP demand 4

Officially commit to assisting in the rebuilding of Gazan educational infrastructures. This would include establishing links and partnerships with Palestinian universities in the form of exchange programs, efforts to preserve archives and the re-establishment/expansion of scholarships for Palestinian students.

SMT response 4

From the beginning of our engagement with Goldsmiths for Palestine we have made clear that we are fully committed to this measure, and believe it is the most meaningful and effective intervention we can make as an institution on this matter.

Colleagues are working to establish a range of proposals which we will share with you as soon as possible.

We recognise that any action taken by Goldsmiths must represent the requirements of our whole community so propose that a working group is established to advise on the College's response. We would like to invite a representative from Goldsmiths for Palestine to be part of this group, which we suggest should also have representation from Goldsmiths' Students Union, Goldsmiths UCU and Goldsmiths UNISON, among other members.

From our research, Goldsmiths appears to be among a handful of UK universities offering scholarships specifically for students from Palestine. We believe we are the only university which offers two such scholarships. At the last Fees and Scholarships Working Group, in recognition of suggestions made by the Students' Union representative, the College agreed to review how this support could be increased.

GfP demand 5

Provide full transparency of all current and future financial investments to demonstrate compliance with Goldsmiths ethical investment policy. In line with previous commitments to divest from fossil fuel and maintain an ethical investment portfolio, we demand an equal commitment to the policy/guidelines outlined in the BDS movement

a. Immediate divestment from current investment in the surveillance company Nice Ltd. totalling £30,134.

b. Audit all HP packard equipment and technical services and cancel any outstanding orders.

SMT response 5

As set out when the Warden and SMT members met with Goldsmiths for Palestine on 20 February, the College is always prepared to consider its approach to investment and procurement.

This was illustrated in 2019 when the College moved all its investments to the COIF Charities Ethical Investment Fund following a community campaign calling for divestment from fossil fuel companies. The decision to move to the COIF Charities Ethical Investment Fund was approved by the Finance and Resources Committee, which includes Goldsmiths Students' Union representation.

In relation to Nice Ltd, we have been in dialogue with the fund which has reviewed said firm.

The fund's appraisal is set out here:

The COIF Ethical fund has two restrictions on military related activities and avoids investment in companies that:

- Produce weapons banned by international convention (cluster bombs, chemical/biological weapons, and/or nuclear weapons); and/or
- Derive more than 10% of revenues from strategic military sales

Strategic military sales identify companies involved in contracts related to military weapons, weapon systems, secondary components of weapons, or weapon related services. This has both a direct and indirect component:

- Direct Involvement: The company manufactures military weapon systems and/or tailor-made components of these weapons
- Indirect Involvement: The company provides non-weapons related to tailor-made products and/or services to the military or defence industry

We have reviewed NICE Ltd against the information provided by our two data providers and can confirm that there is no evidence that NICE Ltd derives any revenues from strategic military sales or has a connection to weapons banned by international convention.

COIF confirms that Nice Systems, which was set up in 1986, initially sought to use software which was developed for the IDF.

Nice Ltd did have a Security business up until 2015, when they sold both the Cyber and Intelligence unit and their Physical Security business (which includes video surveillance) to focus on civilian software.

Nice Ltd now focuses on Customer Engagement (80% of its business) such as contact centre software and some public safety software and Financial Crime and compliance Software (20% of its business) which focuses on anti-money laundering for banks and financial institutions.

In addition, the Fund restricts investment in companies that are in breach of the managers' controversy process which includes breaches of:

- ILO Core Labour Standards; and/or
- UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

Neither of our data providers have identified any issues under either of these two categories.

This concludes the fund's appraisal

Like a huge number of organisations around the world, Goldsmiths does use HP products as part of our digital estate. All of these products are procured via third parties and not directly with HP. [We note that HP issued a statement on divestment in 2021.](#)

As shown in 2019, the College listens to our community on financial matters and we recognise that this could extend to our procurement approach. Any discussions would have to consider the views of all of our community and other external issues including any relevant procurement legislation.

GfP demand 6

Expedite the review and removal of the IHRA definition of antisemitism; adopted by the College in June 2022. We demand that this take place immediately and that the Jerusalem Declaration definition is kept and implemented.

SMT response 6

It is important to note the nature of this review, as agreed by Council in June 2022 when the IHRA definition was adopted alongside the Jerusalem Declaration of Antisemitism and the All-Party Parliamentary Group definition of Islamophobia. Council agreed that this review would consider the impact of the adoption of the IHRA definition on the life of the College rather than the merits or the demerits of the definition itself.

This review was initially due to be carried out by the Race Justice Strategy Board before responsibility for the review was passed to the [independent inquiry into antisemitism](#) which opened in May 2023. We will be able to share the outcome when that process is concluded and its findings have been considered by the relevant governance groups at the College.