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Duck Pond encampment torn down

7 people arrested during confrontation between police and pro-Palestinian protesters

BY GREGORY R.C. HASMAN JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

The pro-Palestinian encampment at the University of New Mexico Duck Pond has been taken down after being in place for about three weeks, and seven people were arrested for criminal trespass and wrongful use of public property.

Of the seven taken into custody, two were UNM students, university spokeswoman Cinnamon Blair said.

“We’ll follow our normal processes through the dean of students regarding violations of the student code of conduct, including investigating allegations and any disciplinary actions,” she said.

Annette Claycomb, the mother of one of the protesters arrested, Elizabeth Gallagher, told the Journal that they are “so proud” of their daughter.

“I agree with her completely and the people who were at the Duck Pond for so long and the people protesting against the genocide,” Claycomb said. “If I was younger and stronger I would have been there, too.” It is unknown if anyone was injured during Wednesday morning’s confrontation between police and pro-Palestinian protesters.

At about 5 a.m. Wednesday, Blair said that the school sent notices to the protesters, stating they needed to get out by 6 a.m.

The university issued a statement Tuesday, informing staff, faculty and students that the encampment needed to be broken up by 5 p.m. The reason the school waited to enforce the request to remove the camp, Blair said, was because “the early morning was an effective time to notify occupants of (the) need to vacate and enforce that notice, and also ensure a safe environment for staff to clear the structure and perform grounds maintenance.”

At about 6 a.m., officers arrived at the Duck Pond.

Some protesters shouted “Free, Free Palestine,” while others banged empty water coolers like drums. A UNM Police officer then warned protesters to leave the camp.

“If you don’t comply with the order, you will be arrested and force may be used,” the officer said.

A few minutes later, officers — some wearing riot gear — walked closer to the encampment. Police in regular uniforms established a perimeter around the site with tape as protesters chanted “Stay There, Stay Tight.” It is unknown if anyone remained inside the camp.

Officers then started taking down signs, wooden pallets and pieces of cardboard while others stood in front of the protesters to ensure they did not come to the site. As protesters watched, they chanted “(Expletive) the police.”

At about 6:40 a.m., UNM facilities maintenance workers drove a garbage truck and a pickup with a container of disinfectants sitting on a trailer. Employees dumped the items inside the garbage truck.

Officers moved protesters back toward the left side of Scholes Hall, where chanting protesters stood toe-to-toe with officers as their camp continued to be taken down.

Blair said police will continue to be at the Duck Pond as UNM staff continue clearing and cleaning up the site.

The incident comes a couple of weeks after 16 protesters, including five UNM students, were arrested at the Student Union Building after marching from the Duck Pond to the SUB.

The Duck Pond encampment had been operating for 24 days until UNM Police and New Mexico State Police began dismantling it after the school’s Tuesday ultimatum.

“Over the past weeks, we have not cited anyone at the Duck Pond for ongoing violations of University policies,” UNM President Garnett Stokes said in a statement. “Despite this leniency, the number and severity of the violations have continued to increase. “Those who do not voluntarily comply will be subject to institutional enforcement of UNM policies and local, state, and federal law.”

About 150 people came to the encampment late Tuesday to listen to speakers and show their support for the protesters.

Class is not in session at UNM. Summer classes are slated to start June 3, while the fall semester is scheduled to begin Aug. 19.

Other speakers included UNM Regents Law Professor Jennifer Moore, who said it is important to “to lessen” the war’s impact on civilians.

The war is causing “disproportionate harm to citizens,” she said.

“No matter how just your cause is, you cannot treat civilians as shields,” Moore said. “You cannot target civilians and you cannot engage in reciprocal violations so if the bad guys are breaking the law, you don’t get to target civilians. If the good guys have a good cause, they don’t get to target civilians.”

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