

WHY WE ARE BOYCOTTING

An Open Letter from No Art Under Apartheid to the Hammer Museum In Solidarity with the UCLA Palestine Solidarity Encampment

On May 1, 2024, a mob of Zionist counter-protesters viciously attacked the Palestine Solidarity Encampment at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and assaulted non-violent student protesters with blunt objects, mace, and explosives. For five consecutive hours, UCLA security and the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) allowed the group to assault, beat, and injure students, staff, faculty, and community members. Following these acts of violence, with chancellor Gene D. Block's approval, LAPD officers in riot gear used rubber bullets and stun grenades to raid and dismantle the encampment, brutalizing over 100 students and arresting 132 protesters. It is in response to this extreme use of police force, authorized by the university, that we urgently write to you today.

We the undersigned artists, academics, cultural workers, curators, students, and community members are opposed to the US-backed genocide in Gaza. We support Palestinian liberation, from the river to the sea, and stand in solidarity with pro-Palestinian student activists across the United States and the globe who are rallying for institutional divestment from the military-industrial complex and war profiteering. We passionately support the students, staff, and faculty of UCLA demanding that the university withdraw its investments from companies, such as BlackRock and Lockheed Martin, that profit from and supply weapons to the ongoing genocide being enacted upon the people of Gaza by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

The escalated genocide in Gaza is the most recent phase of a century-long imperialist project to colonize the land of Palestine and forcibly evict its indigenous peoples. The scale of destruction is staggering and difficult to express or comprehend.

Over half of Gaza's homes and over 60 percent of the rest of Gaza's infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed by Israeli military vandalism, including schools, hospitals, commercial facilities, and hundreds of religious and heritage sites. Every single university in Gaza has been destroyed, while faculty, administrators, and students have been assassinated. 83 percent of groundwater wells are not operational, and the United Nations World Food Program has declared Gaza to be in a "full-blown famine." The very

little food and aid that reaches the Gazan border is prevented from entering the city by the IDF and Zionist extremists.

The world is bearing witness to horror after horror, as the settler-colonial state known as Israel has indiscriminately murdered over 36,000 Palestinians—including more than 15,000 children—in aerial bombardments and ground operations. This number is surely underestimated, as 10,000 people are currently missing, and the Gazan health system has been obliterated by the Israeli invasion. Mass graves have been uncovered at Nasser Hospital, at Al-Shifa Hospital, and other places in Gaza, the final resting places for countless victims who may never be identified.

On May 27, 2024 Israel again bombed the city of Rafah in southern Gaza, a naked violation of the International Court of Justice’s directive to halt its military operations there and in the rest of the Gaza Strip. The attack struck a humanitarian zone in which civilians were forced to flee and were sheltering in tents. Children were dismembered and dozens of people were burned alive. Among the munitions used to massacre civilians in Rafah were GBU-39 small diameter bombs manufactured by Boeing, a “community partner” of the UCLA Foundation.

As an institution owned and operated by UCLA, the Hammer cannot excuse itself from these atrocities in Gaza. The Hammer’s silence and inaction makes it complicit in the aforementioned acts of violence in Gaza and repression of student protesters by the IDF and LAPD, respectively. It is for these reasons that we are calling for a boycott of the Hammer until the following demands are met:

- 1. A statement from the Hammer Museum calling for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza.**
- 2. The removal of disgraced UCLA chancellor Gene D. Block from the Hammer Museum Board of Directors.**

We call on each member of the Hammer’s Artist Council to prepare to resign in protest and solidarity if these demands are not met. We also call upon artists with current or upcoming exhibitions at the Hammer to withdraw their work until these demands are met. As respected practitioners trained in the traditions of institutional critique and other critical arts practices, your advisory role and artistic contributions mean nothing if the institution chooses to back occupation, apartheid, and genocide.

The Hammer claims to associate itself with movements and practices of decolonization, but in the words of Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang: “decolonization is not a metaphor.”

Will the peppering of this phrase in museum publications and exhibitions merely be faddish lip service to something it only understands in abstract terms, or will it take concrete steps to defund and discredit the Israeli pariah state and colonial enterprise?

It is time for the Hammer to put its money where its mouth is. The Hammer cannot honestly stand by its mission to “build a more just world” through art and culture if it does not take action to support the divestment struggle.

Until these demands are met we the undersigned artists, academics, curators, students, and community members promise you nothing short of refusal.

We refuse to be placated by images and objects while artists in Gaza, like Heba Zagout, are murdered everyday.

We refuse to hide behind the safety of four white walls while the Rafah Museum remains in ruins.

We refuse to patron a museum that remains silent in the face of genocide.

Audra Simpson tells us that “refusal...is the consent of revenge” and as long as Gaza is under siege, we are striking back.

Out of the galleries and into the streets.

No Art Under Apartheid.

SIGNATORIES

Gelare Khoshgozaran, Artist, Assistant Professor, UCLA

Carla Orendorff, Staff, UCLA

Kristy Lovich, Staff, UCLA

Nat Decker, Staff, UCLA, Class of 2022

Zarreen Amin, UCLA, Class of 2020

Elaine Kahn, Former Visiting Writer at UCLA

Felix Li, UCLA

Haley Roeser, UCLA, Class of 2022

Clue Quilala, UCLA, Class of 2023

Sydney Acosta, UCLA, Class of 2021

Juliet Lee, PhD, UCLA, Class of 1986

Kate Hall, UCLA, Class of 2020

Zeina Baltagi, UC Davis, Class of 2020

Jodi Chang, UC Santa Barbara Class of 2010

Martabel Wasserman, Lecturer, UC Santa Cruz

Lorena Wilens B.A., UC Santa Cruz, Class of 2022

Isabel Barbera, Staff, UC Berkeley

Vincent Ianniello, Staff, UC Berkeley

Coralys Carter, UC San Diego

Hazel katz, UC San Diego

KRISTIANNE MOLINA, UC San Diego

Wren Gardiner, UC San Diego, Class of 2023

Işık Kaya, UC San Diego Class of 2021

Faleono Maugaotega, UC San Francisco

Dr. Mahzabeen Shaikh, UC San Francisco Class of 2013

Scott Volz, Ph.D., UC Irvine, 2022

Aaron Katzeman, PhD, Art Historian and Curator, UC Irvine Class of 2024

Alicia Drevdahl, BA UC Irvine Class of 2024

Marianna Davison, Ph.D., UC Irvine, Class of 2022

Aliyah Rasheed, UC Riverside Class of 2022

Mrs. Sumaya, Alkatib, UC Riverside

Professor Ra Jarrar, CSU Faculty

Mari Ahverdyan, Museum Educator

Cassie McQuater, New Media Artist and Video Game Developer

Maryam Hosseinzadeh, Artist

Brandon Sward, PhD, Writer

Carlos Ovalle, Mixed Media Artist

Carol Zou, Social Practice Artist

Elizabeth Knafo, Media, Design, and Publisher

Ian Cawley, Photographer and Filmmaker

Solita harder-montoya, Art Archivist

Stephan Payne, Artist, Curator, And Gallery Director

Nina Sarnelle, Video, Performance, and Text-based Artist

Rachelle Sawatsjy, Visual Artist

Sara Blumenthal, Performance Artist

Alejandra ibarra

Amy Montes

Connor Roach

Grace Park

Kimberlie Valadez

Oscar Axel Oliva Mendez

Rachelle Sawatsjy

Sebastian Bustamante-Carranza

simret habte

Taiyea Turner

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