

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UMKC SJP Presents: Liberation Zone - A Call for Solidarity

Kansas City, MO - April 29, 2024 - UMKC Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) proudly announces the transformation of the into a Liberation Zone on Monday, April 29th, starting at 2:00 p.m. This Liberation Zone is a testament to our solidarity with Liberation Zones and encampments happening in other Universities across the nation as part of the Popular Universities for Gaza campaign. Featuring students, faculty, and Kansas City community members, we as a collective remind the world again of the atrocities we help fund. Thus, despite the vibrant posters, energetic atmosphere, and welcoming faces, we are here for one reason: to emphasize our commitment to solidarity with global struggles for freedom, especially those in Gaza.

The Liberation Zone has been inspired by the actions of over 25 universities here in the United States and abroad. However, we all draw our courage and commitment from the Palestinian people in the occupied West Bank and besieged Gaza. Their unwavering determination to demand their basic human rights against Israel, a US-funded settler colonial entity, has inspired us to stand up against the institutions that have used our money, resources, and reputation to further the interests and actions of the apartheid war machine of Israel. We are told to carry on with our daily lives as our emails, calls, and voices for a ceasefire and Palestinian self-determination continue to be ignored. In addition, as our constitutional rights to freedom of speech, expression, and protest are being violated forcefully on campuses across the nation, our administration has remained silent on whether our voices will be snuffed out with the same force.

Thus, as the Gazan civilian death toll rises above 42,000 deaths, we stand together today to make the following demands:

1. We demand that UMKC, and the greater UM System, disclose all financial investments and divest from all companies and institutions that profit from Israeli settler colonial apartheid and occupation in Palestine, including weapons, tech/surveillance, and construction companies, with full transparency regarding those investments and a public commitment to divest.
2. We demand that UMKC, and the greater UM System, immediately terminate all programs and affiliations with Israeli academic institutions, including study abroad and Fulbright scholars that go to Israel.
3. We demand that UMKC, and the greater UM System, restrict companies targeted for boycott and divestment from recruiting on campus, including but not limited to Starbucks.
4. We demand that UMKC take an active role in protecting students, faculty, and staff's constitutional right to free speech, ensuring that there will be no penalties for protesting genocide. This includes the University clearly affirming the distinction between anti-zionism and anti-semitism so that students are not afraid, penalized, or shunned for criticizing the illegal state of Israel.

5. Lastly, we demand our representatives in Congress as well as President Biden heed our calls for a ceasefire in Gaza as well as guarantee the rights of self-determination and return for every Palestinian. In addition, they must hold Israel politically, financially, and legally accountable for its crimes against humanity as presented by the South African and Colombian cases against Israel at the International Court of Justice. The Court ruled with near unanimity for Israel to guarantee that its military does not: “commit acts which constitute a violation of any of the rights of the Palestinians in Gaza as a protected group under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, including by preventing, through any action, the delivery of urgently needed humanitarian assistance,” one of many rulings which have been blatantly disregarded showing the hypocrisy of the ‘only democracy in the Middle East’.

Join us, as students, faculty, and community members take the stage to share our perspectives, experiences, and messages of hope. The University Walkway will be adorned with posters and signs, each conveying messages of solidarity and support. Tents will serve as hubs for dialogue, discussion, and community engagement as well as symbolic representations of daily life for Palestinian refugees.

In a nation where the repression of student voices is enforced with police violence, the Liberation Zone at UMKC SJP will be a beacon of hope, reminding us of the power of collective action and shared humanity, features that shone brightly in our city 50 years ago as our predecessors ended the Vietnam War.

All are welcome to join us in this transformative event to document and contribute to the collective voice of solidarity and liberation.

For more information, please contact:

UMKC Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP)

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About UMKC Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP):

UMKC SJP is a student-led organization dedicated to advocating for the rights and dignity of the Palestinian people. Through education, advocacy, and solidarity actions, SJP works to raise awareness about the ongoing struggle for justice and freedom in Palestine.