

# **The LZ is gone but we remain committed to disrupting and destroying all systems complicit in genocide!**

**Autonomous communique from the so called UW “Liberation Zone”**

Anonymous

June 15<sup>th</sup>

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The following statement was written by a group of comrades who autonomously occupied the University of Washington in solidarity with the broader Palestinian resistance movement globally known as the Student Intifada.

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, a coalition of student organizations known as the United Front for Palestinian Liberation (UF) put out a call to join an occupation to demand that the University of Washington, (1) materially and academically divest from Israel, (2) cut all financial ties with Boeing, (3) and end the repression of pro-Palestinian students, workers, and faculty. This occupation became known as the Liberated Zone (LZ). The UF stated, “we reject our university’s complicity in genocide and refuse to leave until our demands are met” but after only two weeks, a small self-appointed negotiating team signed a vaguely worded agreement with university administrators committing to remove all tents and never establish an encampment again in exchange for tuition waivers for 20 Gazan students (at an unspecified time), tentative opportunities to propose (not guarantee) steps toward divestments, and performative gestures that imply the university supports the safety and well-being of Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim communities.

We know these gestures mean nothing since the university remains complicit in the on-going mass murder of people within these communities. The agreement does not guarantee any form of material divestments from genocide-profiteering companies but instead uses standard deceptive sales tactics to deny and obscure the university’s investments and ties with these companies. The agreement pacified the occupation by inviting students to send representatives to additional inconsequential meetings to discuss their investments and ties with genocide.

When asked for an account of what happened a student occupier explained:

“In the first days of the encampment, the negotiations team insisted that they were very optimistic that the university was willing to meet the demands. Many people who had participated in previous occupations warned against this false hope and emphasized the need for more es-

calation, but they were dismissed as pessimists. After a few days, the negotiations team began to admit that the university was not willing to cut ties with Boeing or give any guarantees for divestment. They still asked everyone to refrain from any escalation and wait until there is a clear dead end. While some autonomously engaged in minor escalations such as graffiti, many waited for more unity around escalation to avoid abrupt fractures. Four days before the agreement was signed, the negotiations team said that the university was not willing to give us anything at all. For the first time, the UF called for escalation albeit in a gradual way. This added a lot of momentum and hope. That night, many groups and individuals autonomously covered buildings all over the campus with graffiti and were preparing for more escalation. The next day, the admin called this a “major escalation” and refused to come to the negotiation table. But in reality, this minor escalation had made the admin very concerned about the momentum for more escalations. So, a day later, the admin came with an offer with the hope of ending our movement and preventing further escalations. By accepting the proposal, the UF helped the University of Washington whitewash their complicity in genocide, while stripping us of the ground that we had a degree of control over, the valuable resources that we had gathered, and the community and momentum we had built for further escalations.” -Anonymous

Another occupier explains, “What happened within the LZ is the same thing we see happen in broader social and political spheres. Whenever a grassroots Leftist mobilization becomes a threat to the status quo, people in power delegate representatives within those popular movements (most often appointing people with specific oppressed identities), give them a sense of agency within their decision-making process (often described as a “seat at the table,”) use those representatives to communicate to larger groups that their voices are being heard and they are working toward meaningful change but often what ends up happening is nothing fundamentally changes because it is easy for these representatives to be disregarded if pressure is not applied outside of negotiations. On a micro-social and political scale, this describes the function of the LZ’s negotiations team, their agreements with UW administrators, and it resembles the function of the Democratic Party within the US political system as a whole. Within the LZ, we also saw attempts to forcibly assimilate small autonomous groups unaffiliated and unwilling to participate with the UF and their negotiation tactics. Smaller self-organized autonomous groups took action as trusted friends and made no attempts to brand, formalize or officiate themselves or their efforts. These groups seemed to confuse and threaten the order of the more established student Organizations since our presence within the LZ was distinguishable. Orgs began referring to us as “the AG” (which stood for Autonomous Group) and requested we send representatives to their meetings. Many of us laughed at this because it felt like they were trying to formalize us against our will. Simply put, many of us engaging in autonomous organizing both within and outside of the LZ identify as anarchists and therefore act without regard to authority. What defines autonomous self-organization is precisely the rejection of all representation. Our power to create change will always lie in direct action.” -Anonymous

For weeks, students of UW along with mixed groups of community members devoted time, energy and resources toward this occupation. We sacrificed health, comfort, and safety for an encampment that could have been a hub for disruption and escalation in solidarity with Palestine. We defended the LZ from Zionist, fascist aggression on two occasions and yet as soon as UW President, Ann Marie Cauce refused to negotiate over some graffiti (what she laughably described as a “major escalation”), the negotiation team accepted the first deal she offered them — because these self-appointed representatives of the LZ believed that the point of negotiating is to argue

effectively, to placate the concerns of the other party, to “win” something “realistic”. But as the broader Palestinian resistance has taught us, our enemies will not give us anything unless we force them to, unless we pressure them enough that they will do anything to make it stop — until refusing a gift from Boeing sounds a lot nicer than waking up to see what those meddling kids have been up to.

As revolutionaries, we do not align ourselves with the terms of this agreement and remain committed to disrupting and destroying all colonial systems complicit in genocide. We know that many of those who poured love and rage into this occupation will do the same. We are insulted by the outcome of the LZ and urge our comrades to withdraw all faith in bureaucratic processes that are designed to pacify and establish control over grassroots movements oriented around direct action. The LZ is gone but the mass-murder of Palestinians continues. Peaceful protests do not stop genocides. We will not allow illegitimate, self-appointed leaders of these Liberal reformist organizations to co-opt our movements and kill our momentum. We call upon those who are dissatisfied with the outcome of the LZ to engage in autonomous actions against the on-going genocide. **DO NOT WAIT FOR FURTHER INSTRUCTION!** We are not done until Palestine is free!

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