

Canadian university sues own students over encampment for Palestine



Anti-war encampment set up on campus of University of Waterloo in Canada, with students demanding divestment from Israel

Ottawa, June 28 (RHC)-- In an unusual, strange and rare move, a Canadian university has filed a lawsuit against its own students seeking \$1.5 million in damages for continuing its anti-war encampment. A court document published by the University of Waterloo said administrators sought "damages in the amount of \$1,500,000, including damages for trespass, damage to property, intimidation, and ejection."

The lawsuit names "persons unknown" and seven specific people by name, and includes their email addresses. The university alleges the student encampment has damaged the school's reputation, driven up administrative and operational costs for the university and depreciated the university's property values.

The lawsuit calls on the encampment participants to stop camping and never do so again on campus. Also, the defendants are directed to restore the school's property to the way it was on May 12, including the removal of all fences, tents, shelters, barriers, rubbish, and more.

Participants of the encampment have also been told to stop interfering with the University's Senate and Board of Governors meetings, and any other school meetings. The document includes conditions for the court to allow Waterloo Regional Police or any police service to remove the encampment and arrest the participants.

In a statement at the time, Occupy UWaterloo said they "refused to sit idly by and watch our university support genocide with our tuition dollars!"

"For seven months the university has lied to, dismissed and surveilled students calling for divestment and an end to UW's financial and academic ties to the genocidal and apartheid entity of Israel."

The University of Waterloo, like many universities across North America, has been accused of double standards when it comes to Israel's savage military campaign in Gaza.

A social media post from the encampment says, "Incredibly shameful that @UWaterloo is choosing to sue their own student body protesting their university's complicity in a genocide that's 9 months in and has claimed the lives of over 40,000."

The post goes on to say, "History will absolve us. But you admin, how will you be remembered?"

The university move has also drawn widespread ridicule from many scholars and academics.

Emmett Macfarlane, a professor in the Department of Political Science, said the university had alluded to incidents of harassment and intimidation in its decision to sue, but "it offers no specifics, and does not even clearly state whether the university has made a legal judgment that a law has been broken (for example criminal harassment) or if is merely responding to complainants' perception."

The encampment has been in place on the lawn outside Graduate House since May 13th, with the participants demanding the school disclose and divest from all connections to Israel's war against Gaza.

There are still several high-profile encampments maintaining their presence in Canada, including at the University of Toronto and McGill University in Montreal. Both universities have indicated that they would be pushing for those to be dismantled, too.

Protests by students intensified in several countries across the world, including Canada, France, Mexico, and Australia, amid a crackdown on U.S. students and a mounting death toll from Israel's war on Gaza.

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