

The People's University for Palestine Statement on the UAlberta Third-Party Investigation

In the aftermath of receiving further information on the Third-Party Review process, we, the student leaders of the People's University for Palestine, reject the 'independent review' commissioned by the Board of Governors to investigate the University of Alberta's decision to have police coercively remove the encampment on May 11.

The encampment removal was violent, unjust, and a betrayal of what the U of A claims to value. It was part of a months-long chain of betrayals of Palestinian students, staff, faculty, and solidarity organizers, and of refusal by the UofA Administration to engage in good faith with us.

The 'independent review' continues this disappointing pattern. Just as the UofA Administration never engaged with the encampment to understand or negotiate around our demands, the 'independent review' was put in place without any attempt by the General Faculties Council (which called for the review) or the Board to communicate with us or others harmed by the UofA's actions. No interest was expressed in what kind of inquiry could take proper account of the harm done to us or be legitimate in our eyes.

Many aspects of the inquiry are inadequate:

- The inquiry is narrowly focused on how the University planned for an encampment and what unfolded after the encampment was established on May 9. It does not place those decisions and actions in the context of months of anti-Palestinian decisions by the University.
- The inquiry is narrowly legalistic: it asks whether Administration's decisions conformed to applicable law, policies, procedures, and regulations. It will not consider the moral legitimacy of the encampment's demands; whether forcibly removing the encampment and destroying people's belongings was the right thing to do; what alternatives were open to the University; what actions would have best expressed the values of a public university on Treaty Six territory in the midst of an ongoing genocide; or what harms were caused by the University's actions. The People's University for Palestine envisioned and embodied a more just, communal, and anti-colonial institution: the inquiry affirms all the givens of the colonial institution as it is, and potentially weaponizes these against "students, staff, and visitors" whose actions it also proposes to scrutinize.
- The inquiry excludes adequate consideration of actions of the Edmonton Police Service. Yet EPS' violence on May 11 can't be separated from the University's reckless position that the

encampment was trespassing and its decision to call police to remove it. Moreover, the harms on May 11 were committed by EPS working with University of Alberta Protective Services and contractors for the University.

- The inquiry ignores that the sweep of the encampment was violent, and that this violence caused harm and trauma to those brutalized. It is not a trauma-informed process. No mental health supports are offered to those being asked to recount what happened to them.
- No questions are allowed.
- The only way to submit testimony is in writing and only one email can be sent.
- No attempt has so far been made to reach people outside of the University of Alberta community, though some of those participating in the encampment and harmed by its clearance were alumni and other members of the broader community.
- While the Board of Governors will receive the ‘papers and records of the Review’ there is no commitment to transparency about the University’s actions, no promise to make the University’s documentation public or share information with encampment leaders or their legal representatives.

Rather than allowing ourselves to be subdued into complacency by false wins, The People’s University for Palestine will be modeling an alternative, caring, and communal response to the University of Alberta’s complicity in a continuing genocide. From our values of care, justice, and commitment to decolonization from Treaty Six to Palestine, we have decided to model an alternative to the unhelpful ‘independent inquiry’ being carried out by the BoG.

On the evening of August 1, we invite people to gather at the University of Alberta to hear testimonies from those who were at the People’s University for Palestine and who were harmed by the University’s actions towards the encampment, culminating in its violent clearance on May 11.

- This process will be led and held by those most directly affected by the University’s decisions, and will include consultation with Indigenous people about protocols to address the University bringing violence onto Indigenous lands.
- We will ask people who want to speak what they need to feel safe and supported, including what kinds of culturally appropriate care are needed. We recognize that recounting violence and harm can be distressing and will have supports available before, during, and after our event.
- Reflecting principles of disability justice, we will offer people multiple ways to offer testimony including support to pre-record a video, speak in person at the event, or have someone else read

testimony. If more people wish to present than can do so at our event, we will offer the chance to consent to including testimony in a compilation that will be made public.

- Our event will be a manifestation of community and of a communal desire to hear and hold the experiences of those affected by the University's actions. We understand the importance of people being collectively witnessed in a supportive and caring environment.

While each person who experienced the encampment can decide for themselves whether they wish to submit written testimony to the 'independent inquiry', student leaders of the encampment refuse to legitimize the University's inadequate and harmful process. Instead, **we invite Adèle Kent (leader of 'independent inquiry') and senior administrators and Board members from the University of Alberta and MacEwan University** (whose students, staff, and faculty were also harmed) to come to our event.

Individual written submissions to the review will simply state that we will share our experiences in our own terms at our event on August 1st. If the Reviewer (Adèle Kent) or University leaders truly wish to learn from the encampment, they should attend and listen well. We invite others affected by the encampment to respond to the inquiry's solicitation of testimony in the same way. At the August 1 event, we will articulate our demands of the University and for an adequate inquiry process.

Further details about the event will be released soon.

Til liberation,

The People's University for Palestine