

# Australian universities begin dismantling anti-genocide student encampments

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Over the past week, Australian universities have begun dismantling student encampments set up to protest Israel's genocide in Gaza and the universities' ties to the Israeli and allied military forces.

Students involved in the remaining encampments are under increasingly hysterical attacks and threats by university management, working in tandem with the Labor government of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

For weeks, the federal and state Labor governments and university administrations have threatened to deploy police against the encampments and discipline students involved in the protests.

Trampling over the democratic rights of students is of a piece with the Albanese government's defence for the past seven months of Israel's genocide on the fraudulent basis that it is "defending itself." Albanese declared earlier this month that the peaceful protests against the mass killings of Palestinians were a divisive display of "hatred" and "ignorance" that did not "have a place" in society.

What is now occurring is the following through of Albanese's declaration.

Last week, five university encampments in Melbourne existed. Now, only the RMIT University encampment remains.

The first to be dismantled was at Monash University. The university administration claims the protesters left voluntarily. However, the students allege that the university sent security staff to dismantle the protest physically. According to the encampment organisers, nine students have also been threatened with suspension or expulsion.

Deakin University issued a directive on May 13 demanding the shutdown of its encampment and threatening students with disciplinary action if they did not comply. After a second directive from management, the encampment was closed on Thursday.

At La Trobe University, a statement on Wednesday by the encampment organisers claimed that "management is trying to discipline pro-Palestine student activists and forced the dismantling of the Gaza Solidarity Camp."

At the University of Melbourne, the organisers ended the encampment this week, claiming a "major win." According to the encampment organisers, Unimelb For Palestine, the

supposed "win" is that the university management agreed to disclose its research partnerships with weapons manufacturers next month.

Vice-Chancellor Duncan Maskell sent an email to staff and students stating that "the University is committing to additional disclosure of its research grant arrangements as they relate to research projects, the parties who support that research and the quantum. Disclosure is subject to confidentiality obligations, national security regulations and laws, and the safety and security of our researchers undertaking their academic work."

In other words, the management, which does not mention Israel or Gaza in its statement, will disclose only what it deems appropriate given "confidentiality" and "national security" considerations.

It is an open secret that the University of Melbourne, like Australia's other universities, has lucrative partnerships with leading arms manufacturers and defence contractors, such as its publicly-announced Lockheed Martin research laboratory. These links have deepened over the past decade as successive Australian governments have increasingly integrated the country into US-led war preparations against China.

Even if the University of Melbourne management does disclose some further ties, it will do nothing to prevent the ongoing genocide in Gaza, which has been given full-throated support by all the US and allied imperialist governments, including the Labor government in Australia. There is no commitment to divest itself of these ties, so the status quo remains.

That such developments could be called a "victory" is itself an expression of the bankruptcy of the politics presented by the political leaderships of the encampments, above all the pseudo-left organisations such as Socialist Alternative, Socialist Alliance and Solidarity in Australia.

These organisations are directing students to inert appeals to the university administrations at the particular campus where the encampments are taking place. This is a further watering down of even the impotent protest politics presented at weekly protests in Australia, which seek to channel opposition to the genocide behind appeals to the Labor government and the trade unions that have suppressed working-class opposition since the genocide began.

The concern in ruling circles is that if the encampments are not shut down quickly, broader layers will begin to take action—outside the control of the pro-capitalist fake left and trade unions—against the genocide and war.

Encampments remain in other major Australian cities—Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, and the national capital Canberra—as well as the regional industrial city of Newcastle. However, the political establishment and university administrations are intensifying their pressure on these protests to shut down.

The universities management, the media and the Albanese government echo the lie that opposition to the Gaza genocide is antisemitic, claiming that the encampments make Jewish students feel “unsafe.” This is based on fraudulently equating the Israeli Zionist state and its war crimes with all Jewish people. There have been no instances where Jewish students have indicated their lack of safety on these campuses.

Under the guise of combating “violence” and ensuring “safety” on campuses, the administrations and the Labor governments are stripping away the most basic democratic rights to free speech and freedom to protest on the campuses.

Two students at the University of Sydney were suspended for one month, after the university administration claimed that classes were “significantly disrupted” by protests last week.

At the start of classes, the students had made announcements about the university’s ties with Israel. Management emailed all staff and students, claiming protesters had “intimidated” lecturers and committed other violations. Media reports, however, had to concede that many of the students in the classes supported the speakers.

Students have also reportedly been threatened with disciplinary action at Canberra’s Australian National University and the University of Adelaide.

While the scale of the encampments and the violence of the attacks against them in Australia are not the same as internationally, the threats and attempts to suppress the democratic rights of students are part of a broader offensive around the world. Police have violently suppressed student protests against the genocide in the US, Canada and Germany.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has insisted since the attacks on the student encampments began that the defence of democratic rights and the fight against them requires the mobilisation of the working class.

On May 1, the WSWS posted a statement by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) calling for workers to come to the defence of the students and for the students to turn to the working class for support. It said the issues raised by the students “cannot be resolved on the campuses, but rather in the factories, warehouses, railroads and docks. The working class, the most powerful social force on earth, which creates all wealth through its labour, must leverage that power to force an end to genocide and war.”

In a significant step, graduate student members of the United

Auto Workers (UAW) Local 4811 at the University of California voted overwhelmingly this month in favour of a political strike in defence of student protesters and against the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

They have come under attack from the university management, which speaks for the administration of “Genocide Joe” Biden. The UAW bureaucracy has sought to stifle and isolate the action to only one of the university’s 10 campuses, but massive rank-and-file anger has forced it to expand the strike to two other campuses next week.

As the WSWS explained, the strike is a “major step forward” because it “poses the entry of the working class into the struggle as the basic political force against war.”

The genocide in Gaza is not an isolated development. It is part of an emerging World War III, with the US and its imperialist allies trying to offset their economic decline through military violence. This includes the proxy war in Ukraine and the escalating US economic and military confrontation with China, both of which raise the danger of a nuclear conflict.

That is why the hostility to the genocide and war must be connected to a deeper revolutionary movement against the system which causes imperialist violence: capitalism. The genocide cannot be ended through appeals to the same capitalist governments that are backing the slaughter, nor the university administrations.

Around the world, governments are turning to authoritarian forms of rule in order to impose the agenda of war and the accompanying assault on democratic rights and social conditions.

Workers must defend student protests, and students must turn to the working class, the sole revolutionary force in capitalist society, and fight for a socialist program aimed at ending the entire system that leads to war and dictatorship.



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