

Ireland: Massive Public Support for Pro-Palestine Encampment at Trinity College Dublin (TCD) - Book of Kells Closed Indefinitely

Tuesday 7 May 2024, by [Ó FLATHARTA Tomás](#) (Date first published: 5 May 2024).

Students encamped on the grounds of Trinity College Dublin (TCD) in protest at the university's ties with Israel will stay "indefinitely, until our demands are met", a spokesman for the group said.

Massive public support for the students and staff encampment for Palestine [@tcddublin](#). [@tcdsu](#) [@TrinityBDS](#) [@PWO_TCD](#) [@AcaforPalestine](#) are demanding that Trinity cut ties with Israel, make a statement on the Gaza genocide and support Palestinian students via scholarships. Free ☐☐! pic.twitter.com/JBmwgszSjS

— László Molnárfi (SU) (@TCDSU_President) [May 4, 2024](#)

Something to remember for all those giving out about using memorial benches as a barricade. They can be returned to their original position. The thousands of Palestine men, women, and children who have been murdered by Israel can not. They are gone forever. [#DivestSanctionBoycott](#) <https://t.co/WOqBjb0FKF>

— Niamh Ní Cheallaigh ☐☐☐☐ (@NiamhbWalshe) [May 4, 2024](#)

#DivestNow #AcademicBoycott

Irish Times Report, May 5 2024; Ronan McGreevy, Fiachra Gallagher

Trinity College Dublin closed 'until further notice' as protest against Israel ties continues

Several dozen students who have set up camp on the university's grounds, blockading entrance to Book of Kells, say they will remain 'indefinitely' until demands are met



Pro-Palestine Encampment, Trinity College Dublin (TCD)



Book of Kells Closed

Students encamped on the grounds of Trinity College Dublin (TCD) in protest at the university's ties with Israel will stay "indefinitely, until our demands are met", a spokesman for the group said.

Outgoing TCD students union president László Molnárfi said the protesters want Trinity to begin "the process of complete divestment from Israel wherever applicable", including severing relations with Israeli universities on joint research projects.

The encampment, which has closed the Book of Kells to visitors this weekend, continued to grow on Saturday.

Roughly 50 tents were pitched on Fellow's Square on Saturday morning, as upwards of 70 students gathered at the centre of the camp for a meeting. As the meeting took place, more protesters arrived holding tents and camping equipment.

The encampment, which follows similar demonstrations on university campuses in the United States, is being led by Trinity College Dublin Student's Union (TCDSU) and Trinity College Dublin Boycott, Divest Sanction (TCD BDS).

Speaking on RTÉ Radio on Saturday, Mr Molnárfi criticised TCD's decision in recent days to fine TCDSU €214,000 for financial losses incurred by disruptive protests throughout the year. He described it as a "clear attempt at suppressing the student voice".

Asked how long the current protest would last, Mr Molnárfi replied "indefinitely, until our demands are met" and said "we will resist if they try to move us or stop the blockage".

The protesters have made a number of demands of Trinity. In a social media post, TCD BDS called

for the university to sever “every single tie with Israeli institutions, organisations and investment”.

The protesters have also called on Trinity to make “an unequivocal statement of solidarity condemning the ongoing genocide, destruction of infrastructure, settler-colonialism, apartheid and occupation of Palestine”.

They have further called for Trinity to “fully support” 100 Palestinian scholars in their studies at the university and “reparations” for its perceived complicity in Israel’s destruction of Gaza.

In support of their claims surrounding the Trinity’s links to Israeli organisations, protesters [cited work done by TCD researchers](#) in conjunction with academics at Israeli universities on medical, pharmaceutical and other scientific projects funded by the European Union.

In a statement on Saturday, the university said: “Trinity respects the strong stance expressed by the people participating in the encampment protest and blockade, and we support the right to peaceful protest. There are also however many good reasons why the university’s policies, including health and safety, dignity and respect, must be followed when doing so.

“Our duty of care to students and staff is paramount. In order to ensure we can deliver on that duty of care for our students, we are ensuring that those protesting on campus are members of the college community, so access to campus has been restricted to students and staff with valid college ID cards only. We have not made this decision lightly.

“Regrettably, this will have a direct impact on our students and staff. Our libraries, sports centre, Book of Kells Experience, Old Library and the Pavilion Bar have been closed until further notice while sports fixtures, a concert and social events have been cancelled, postponed or moved to another venue.

“Trinity shares concerns about the ferocious onslaught in Gaza and the ongoing dire humanitarian crisis. We have taken a number of practical steps in response to the war in Gaza. These range from updating our investment portfolio with a view to excluding UN blacklist companies, to providing supports for students from Gaza coming to study in Trinity.

“Trinity is always open to engaging with staff and students on these issues: in the past week alone, the Provost has met with Academics for Palestine and also with the Students’ Union President and Students’ Union officers to discuss these issues. We also continue to engage with our Jewish staff and students who are impacted.”

TCD also referenced a May 1st statement posted to provost Linda Doyle’s website.

“I abhor and condemn all violence and war, including the atrocities of October 7th and the continuing, ferocious and disproportionate onslaught in Gaza. The humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the dehumanisation of its people is obscene,” Ms Doyle said.

Hundreds of Trinity staff and postgraduates previously signed a call for the university provost to conduct a review of links to Israeli institutions.

In a statement the university said it has an endowment fund which is not run by the college, but by investment managers. Its selection of companies is guided by the UN Global Compact Violators List, the UN Level 5 Controversy List, and the ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) performance of the company. “Over the past few months, we have been doing further work and, as a result of this, the portfolio will be updated with reference to the UN blacklist,” it added.

On Saturday, Mr Molnárfi said there were many Israeli companies not on the UN blacklist in the endowment fund, and there were also academic ties that should be severed.

On Saturday morning, many of the protesters wore traditional Palestinian keffiyehs, while tents were draped in Palestinian flags and Irish Tricolours.

The camp sits adjacent to the Old Library - which houses the Book of Kells - a significant revenue-driver for the university. The entrance to the Old Library was closed off on Saturday morning, after students piled wooden benches in front of the door to block entry.

Banners in front of the Old Library, placed there by protesters overnight, carried slogans such as: "Boycott Apartheid Israel", "Trinity Funds Genocide", and "Trinity is complicit in genocide".

At the centre of the camp, a gazebo covered a bench piled with food provisions. One Garda watched the protesters from a distance on Saturday morning.

Access to the campus was restricted on Saturday, with Trinity security personnel checking identification cards of those seeking to gain access at the Lincoln Place entrance. In a statement, the college said that, "to ensure safety, access to campus is restricted to students, staff, residents and Department of Sports Members with college ID cards only".

The university's front gate, at College Green, was locked, as well as entrances on Pearse Street and Nassau Street. The campus was quiet on Saturday as a result.

In a statement on Friday posted on X, Mr Molnárfi said: "Students at Trinity College Dublin have set up an encampment for Palestine, demanding that their university cut ties with Israel as per BDS [Boycott, Divest, Sanction] principles supported by the vast majority of students and staff."

On Friday, TCD management defended its decision to fine the college's students' union €214,000 for financial losses incurred by disruptive protests throughout the year.

The union and protest groups have been involved in blocking access to the Book of Kells in protest over issues such as fee increases and the university's stance on [Gaza](#) on several occasions since last September.

The move has sparked criticism from students, academics and some politicians who described the move as an attempt to suppress student protest.

In a statement, Trinity College Dublin said it was a not-for-profit organisation that could not survive solely on Government funding and depends on other sources of income.

Jeffrey Sardina of TCD's PWO (Postgraduate Workers' Organisation) said he has been warned that he will not be allowed to graduate if he or the union do not pay the fine.

Mr Sardina has been summoned to a meeting with the Junior Dean in TCD to explain his and other students actions in blocking access to the Book of Kells in the college.

The letter states that, unless the fine is paid, the sum of money could become a "debt to the university that must be paid as a prerequisite to graduation".

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P.S.

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