

CUPE 3913

Teaching Assistants and Sessional Lecturers at the University of Guelph

Members of CUPE 3913,

Against the orders of the International Court of Justice, Israel has recently attacked Rafah, the last refuge for Palestinians forced to migrate from heavily bombed areas. As more Canadian campuses have become the sites of protests against the actions of the Israeli government in the Gaza Strip, this recent attack makes calls for divestment even more pressing. With more than 35,000 Palestinians killed since October 2023, we echo the calls of campus groups to have our universities divest from war and destruction.

Our executive committee has thought deeply about this issue. We unequivocally stand against the atrocities taking place and we support our members' rights to protest. We are here in the event that consequences are imposed by the university administration.

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We reject the conflation of Zionism and Jewish identity occurring across campuses and we stand firmly against anti-Semitism. We understand the difference between the state of Israel and the people of Israel, and support Jewish people around the world who strongly criticize the atrocities against the Palestinian people. CUPE 3913 does not tolerate or accept any Islamophobic, anti-Palestinian, or anti-Semitic rhetoric. We are here to support members who experience any hate of any kind.

Many Canadian universities, including our own University of Guelph, have millions of dollars invested in companies that manufacture weapons and other military technology used against Palestinians every day. Recently, UofG for Palestine, a local campus group, released a report outlining the university's investments over 2023-2024 (find the report and more on their linktree). We encourage interested members to read the report and reach out to the group if they would like to get involved.

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Campuses have long been the sites of humanitarian activism, from major anti-war protests throughout the 20th century to demonstrations around South African apartheid. Since the 1970's, these movements have been further complicated by the increasing financialization of North American universities. As universities have developed larger and larger investment portfolios, necessary to keep them afloat amidst increasing austerity, students have continued to have ethical concerns about what these campuses are investing in. On campus, unions have historically contributed to coalitions for justice. Our union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) has fought for the rights of underrepresented workers for many decades, notably fighting against Vietnam war efforts in the 1960s and for divestment from South African apartheid in the 1980s, actions which were taken before popular opinion aligned with CUPE's position.

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Thus, we wish to draw attention to local groups such as **Guelph for Palestine** and **Independent Jewish Voices Guelph** for members who may be looking to get involved.

We recognize that this is an issue which is likely to elicit a strong emotional response in many people. If you need support, please consider reaching out to a student wellness navigator or accessing the mental health supports available on campus.

In Solidarity,

CUPE 3913 Executive Committee