

For Immediate Release
8/21/24

**UW Madison Opens Disciplinary Investigations Against Palestinian Students and their
Allies to Suppress Calls for Divestment**

From the 17 Students & Staff under University Investigation
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On April 29th of this year, an encampment was created on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus in solidarity with Palestine to pressure the university to divest from weapons manufacturing, operations in occupied territories, and prisons. Through these investments, UW-Madison has profited from human rights violations around the world, most notably from Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza that has directly killed more than 40,000 Palestinians since October and is associated with infrastructure damage that is projected to result in [a cumulative death toll of five times that](#). This demonstration was the continuation of the long history of student protests on UW-Madison campus to hold the university to account, whether it be in opposition to the Vietnam War or in favor of divestment from apartheid South Africa.

While the university is proud to [highlight this history of student activism today](#), it has systematically targeted students, staff, faculty, and community speaking out in solidarity with Palestine: on May 1st, 2024 the university sent four police departments to attack peaceful demonstrators, and now we see disciplinary investigations brought against individual students with little evidence.

In the past two months, the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards (OSCCS) of the University of Wisconsin-Madison has opened student conduct investigations against at least 17 students/staff over alleged non-academic misconduct associated with the Gaza Solidarity encampment set up on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus in the spring. The investigations were communicated to students by various members of the OSCCS under the guise of "open and honest discussion(s)... to advocate for [our]selves." However, these disciplinary investigations appear to be targeted at silencing students and staff who have stood in solidarity with Palestine. The university is generally relying on little to no evidence in these disciplinary proceedings, in some cases basing the investigations merely on students making public statements in support of the divestment movement or assuming guilt by associating with pro-Palestine organizations.

Investigators recommended that 4 students being investigated based on their affiliation to Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) be sanctioned with [disciplinary probation for a year](#), a status that shows up on official transcripts and could affect access to opportunities "including,

but not limited to study abroad, scholarships, and student employment” (as described by the OSCCS). 11 students were recommended a sanction of reprimand. One student was found not responsible, and we don’t know the outcome of the last student’s case. It is of note that all of the students who were recommended the harsher sanction of probation were Palestinian, while all non-Palestinian students were recommended the lesser sanction of a written reprimand. The students have been informed that if these reprimands or probations are enacted, the sanction would remain on their record indefinitely, and “future misconduct by you may result in a more serious disciplinary response from the University.”

These disciplinary investigations are unjust, as they are based on weak evidence and designed to target students acting in solidarity with Palestine, and students intend to [request hearings to challenge these preliminary decisions](#). The purpose of these sanctions is to silence students and prevent further protests against the university’s complicity in the ongoing genocide in Gaza through its investments in borders, weapons, and occupation. In this summer’s pursuit of students, and its refusal to divest from genocide, UW-Madison and its administrative body is acting against its [stated principles in the Wisconsin Idea](#). These investigations create a chilling effect targeting pro-Palestine speech and affiliation with pro-Palestine organizations at this university, undermining [the university’s self-proclaimed commitment to academic freedom](#) with direct negative consequences on Palestinian students and community members of UW.

UW-Madison cannot claim to value academic freedom and the role of the university to [positively influence lives beyond the classroom](#) while targeting its students, staff, and faculty who act in solidarity with Palestinians.

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