

May 1, 2024

# SOCIETY FOR SOCIALIST STUDIES

RE: McGill Divestment Encampment

To the McGill Board of Governors and the Board of Directors of the Federation of Humanities and Social Sciences,

For more than 200 days, the government of Israel has pursued a campaign against the Palestinians of Gaza that the Amnesty International has indicated is genocidal. Since October 7, as a consequence of Israel's bombardment and ground invasion, Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor reports that 42,510 Palestinians have been killed. As many as 1.2 million people have been displaced, at least 131,000 housing units have been destroyed, and the UN indicates that much of Gaza is at imminent risk of famine. All of Gaza's universities have been destroyed, raising concerns amongst the global scholarly community that a 'scholasticide' is being carried out.

Amidst all this, the Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences propose to host their annual Congress at McGill University under the theme 'Sustaining Shared Futures.'

On April 27 students at McGill set up an encampment on campus, demanding that the university disclose its financial investments in Israel, divest from said holdings, protect students who have supported Palestinian human rights, and publicly condemn the genocide of Palestinians. Amongst the student organizations supporting the encampment are McGill Hunger Strike for Palestine, Students for Justice in Palestine, Palestinian Youth Movement—Montréal, Independent Jewish Voices—McGill, and Solidarité pour les droits humains des Palestiniennes et Palestiniens. University President, Deep Saini, ordered that the encampment be dismantled and on April 30 issued a statement that McGill is prepared to use the Montréal police to remove the encampment. This despite the fact that even a police spokesperson indicated that "no crime is being committed."

Both McGill and the Federation have rhetorically committed themselves to reconciling their relationship with the Indigenous peoples on whose territories they work. Therefore, the Society for Socialist Studies demands that both institutions heed the call from Stuart Myiow, Wolf Clan of Kahnawà:ke: "in accordance with the Two Row Wampum Peace Treaty, we grant the full right to those who are occupying McGill." He further makes clear that: "Institutions of higher learning must not be invested in or connected to any genocide, war or military action." Sustaining shared futures demands that we reject apartheid and settler colonialism, condemn the ongoing genocide, and work towards decolonization.

The Society for Socialist Studies stands in solidarity with the demands of the encampment. We demand that McGill uphold the rights freedom of expression and association/assembly exercised by the encampment, as well as the academic freedom of students. We demand that the Federation convey its solidarity with the encampment directly to President Saini. In light of the upcoming Congress, the Federation cannot sidestep its obligations to work toward an inclusive and democratic society.

The Society for Socialist Studies will look into alternative venues for our conference and encourage other associations to do the same, should McGill use police to displace the divestment encampment. It should also be noted that such a change of venue/cancellation would bring enormous negative publicity to McGill.

Sincerely,

2023-2024 Executive of  
The Society for Socialist Studies