# Pro-Palestine protester chains himself to Cambridge Senate House gates during graduations



A pro-Palestine demonstrator created significant disruption at Cambridge University on May 23, chaining himself to the gates of the Senate House during graduation ceremonies. Dressed in a boiler suit stained with red paint, the protestor used a padlock and zip-tie to secure himself, vocally asserting his stance with chants of "Free Palestine." This act of protest drew attention not only for its theatrics but also for its timing, coinciding with the celebrations of graduates from Queen's, St Catherine's, and Jesus Colleges.

The scene was marked by the presence of around a dozen other demonstrators, who waved Palestine flags and wore face masks, standing in solidarity with the primary protestor. This event unfolded against a backdrop of heightened tensions regarding the university's policies on free expression and protest rights. In March, the University of Cambridge was granted a High Court injunction aimed at banning protests related to Palestine on certain parts of the campus until the end of July 2025, a ruling that has drawn criticism from various human rights groups.

Activists, including those from the student-led group 'Cambridge for Palestine,' have been vocal in their opposition to what they perceive as a chilling attempt to stifle dissent. This group has long campaigned for the university to divest from companies seen as complicit in the ongoing conflict in Palestine. Following public pressure, King's College, which is part of the university, made headlines by pledging to cease investment in arms companies, indicating a shift towards a more socially responsible investment strategy in response to activism.

The High Court's decision to uphold a temporary ban on protests was deemed necessary by the university, which argued that there was a "real and imminent risk" of disruptions similar to past incidents that had marred graduation events. Critics have warned, however, that such legal measures represent an alarming escalation in efforts to silence voices advocating for Palestinian rights. The situation has intensified discussions surrounding the right to protest within academic institutions, with some experts arguing that attempts to restrict protests can infringe on fundamental freedoms.

This demonstrative event is not an isolated incident but part of a growing trend where student activism at Cambridge and other UK universities increasingly challenges institutional relationships related to the Israel-Palestine conflict. The protests have gained momentum in recent years, with more than 100 universities participating in global actions for Palestine, reflecting widespread discontent among the student body regarding institutional complicity in the conflict.

As such, the interaction on the gates of the Senate House not only symbolises a singular protest but also encapsulates a larger movement advocating for fundamental changes in university policies regarding investment and ethical oversight. As the University of Cambridge continues to navigate these complex issues, the balance between maintaining order during ceremonial events and upholding the robust tradition of free speech remains a pivotal challenge.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/news/cambridge-news/gallery/pro-palestine-protester-padlocks-himself-31710724), [[2]](https://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/news/cambridge-news/gallery/pro-palestine-protester-padlocks-himself-31710724)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/news/cambridge-news/gallery/pro-palestine-protester-padlocks-himself-31710724), [[4]](https://www.newarab.com/news/uk-cambridge-slammed-chilling-ban-pro-gaza-protests), [[5]](https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/issue/cambridge-university-granted-extreme-protest-injunction/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.newarab.com/news/uk-cambridge-slammed-chilling-ban-pro-gaza-protests), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/may/06/students-stage-pro-palestine-occupations-at-five-more-uk-universities)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/issue/cambridge-university-granted-extreme-protest-injunction/), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/may/06/students-stage-pro-palestine-occupations-at-five-more-uk-universities)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/may/06/students-stage-pro-palestine-occupations-at-five-more-uk-universities), [[7]](https://www.thetab.com/uk/cambridge/2024/06/19/cambridge-universitys-st-johns-may-ball-disrupted-by-pro-palestine-protest-177511)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/news/cambridge-news/gallery/pro-palestine-protester-padlocks-himself-31710724> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/news/cambridge-news/gallery/pro-palestine-protester-padlocks-himself-31710724> - A pro-Palestine demonstrator disrupted graduation ceremonies at Cambridge University on May 23 by chaining himself to the gates of the Senate House. Wearing a boiler suit smeared with red paint, he secured himself using a padlock and zip-tie, chanting 'Free Palestine.' Approximately a dozen other demonstrators waved Palestine flags and wore face masks outside the ceremonies for Queen's, St Catherine's, and Jesus Colleges. In March, the university had been granted a High Court injunction to prevent pro-Palestine protests on parts of the campus until the end of July. King's College, part of Cambridge University, declared in May that it would cease investing in arms companies following public outcry. The student-led group 'Cambridge for Palestine' had urged the university to divest from companies 'complicit in the ethnic cleansing of Palestine.' The University of Cambridge has been approached for comment.
3. <https://www.icjpalestine.com/2025/03/03/high-court-rejects-bid-by-the-university-of-cambridge-for-a-long-term-injunction-on-palestine-protests/> - On February 27, 2025, the High Court of Justice rejected the University of Cambridge's bid for a long-term injunction aimed at banning Palestine-related protests at four university sites until 2030. The university's application followed a series of high-profile encampments and demonstrations led by Cambridge for Palestine (C4P) at Senate House Yard in May and November 2024. Despite the university's legal efforts to impose a sweeping five-year protest ban, the court issued a narrow, two-day injunction that restricted entry to Senate House and Senate House Yard, explicitly removing any references to Palestine or C4P, while preserving the right to protest in surrounding areas. The ruling was hailed as a victory for student activists, affirming their right to protest and challenging the university's attempts to suppress political expression on campus.
4. <https://www.newarab.com/news/uk-cambridge-slammed-chilling-ban-pro-gaza-protests> - The University of Cambridge has been condemned by activists and rights groups for obtaining a High Court injunction that effectively bans pro-Palestinian protests on its campus until July 26, 2025. The ruling, issued by Mr. Justice Soole, was described as a 'chilling attack on free speech.' The university had initially sought a more long-term injunction, requesting a five-year order to block protests related to the Israel-Palestine conflict on its grounds. However, last month a judge rejected this bid, citing its overreach. In a second attempt, Cambridge University returned to court in mid-March to seek a four-month order to prevent disruptions during key graduation events. The court's decision was grounded in the argument that there was a 'real and imminent risk' of recurring protests, which had already disrupted ceremonies in previous years. Critics have slammed the ruling as an alarming escalation in efforts to silence voices speaking out against Israel's actions in Gaza.
5. <https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/issue/cambridge-university-granted-extreme-protest-injunction/> - On March 21, 2025, the High Court granted Cambridge University's proposed injunction against any protests related to Palestine and Israel until the end of July 2025. The university was originally seeking a five-year injunction but reduced the request to five months following interventions from the European Legal Support Center (ELSC), supported by Liberty and the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to protest. Liberty intervened in the case, accusing the university of 'attempting to silence students and academics.' The court's decision has been criticized as setting a dangerous precedent that will severely restrict protest rights on campus. Liberty's Head of Policy and Campaigns, Ruth Ehrlich, stated that the judgment 'sets a dangerous precedent which will severely restrict protest rights on campus.'
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/may/06/students-stage-pro-palestine-occupations-at-five-more-uk-universities> - Students from the group Cambridge for Palestine, along with Oxford Action for Palestine, initiated pro-Palestinian protests at their respective universities, including Cambridge, in May 2024. The protesters set up encampments and demanded that their universities divest from companies linked to Israeli actions in Gaza and the West Bank. They also called for the universities to help rebuild Gaza's education system, end institutional relationships with Israeli universities, and protect the safety of students and staff involved in pro-Palestinian action. The protests were part of a broader movement involving over 100 universities globally taking action for Palestine.
7. <https://www.thetab.com/uk/cambridge/2024/06/19/cambridge-universitys-st-johns-may-ball-disrupted-by-pro-palestine-protest-177511> - On June 19, 2024, students representing the group Cambridge For Palestine disrupted the annual St John's May Ball at Cambridge University. Protesters dressed in keffiyehs positioned themselves on top of St John's New Court's exterior walls, launching red, white, and green flares to represent the colors of the Palestinian flag. They also dropped a banner reading 'Cambridge: Divest from Genocide,' while attendees gathered alongside members of the security team to watch the events unfold. Some members of the crowd were heard chanting 'Free free Palestine' and 'Palestine will be free, Palestine will live forever.' This disruption was part of a wider series of protest actions initiated by Cambridge For Palestine, which began following a Freedom of Information request concerning Trinity College's investments in February 2024.