# Pro-Palestine activists set up camp at Trinity College demanding arms divestment



Pro-Palestine activists have established an encampment outside Trinity College, Cambridge, in a bold demonstration demanding that the University divest from arms companies linked to Israel. This protest, organised by Cambridge for Palestine (C4P), began at approximately 5:30 pm on 30 May and aims to challenge the University’s perceived complicity in what protesters describe as genocide, urging an end to financial ties with firms such as BAE Systems, Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and Rolls-Royce.

The encampment follows C4P's assertion that the University blocked progress toward meaningful divestment through a working group focused on arms investments. Activists claim that the administration has also implemented restrictive "anti-protest" policies to stifle dissent. This contention appears rooted in ongoing frustrations from C4P over a working group convened last year meant to review the University’s investments in the arms sector. Critics allege that the group has been ineffective due to limited student representation, which has prompted previous occupations of significant University locations, including Senate House Lawn and Greenwich House.

Despite these tensions, the University asserts that its injunctions against protests do not infringe upon free speech, labelling such claims as “ridiculous.” This has not deterred activists, who continue to point to historical precedents that demonstrate the effectiveness of sustained pressure; notably, recent actions by King’s College, which successfully divested from similar companies, ignited calls for a comparable commitment from Trinity College.

At the forefront of C4P's grievances is the Cambridge Service Alliance, a coalition linking the University with leading corporations, which has partnerships with the aforementioned arms companies. Protesters expressed strong disapproval of research partnerships at the Whittle Lab—a climate research facility—highlighting its ties with Rolls-Royce. One speaker claimed that the lab's existence was fundamentally linked to Rolls-Royce and lamented that students pursuing climate initiatives must collaborate with a company involved in military research, describing it as contrary to their "charitable goals."

C4P’s choice of Trinity College as a protest site is strategic, built on the College's recent controversy surrounding its investments. In 2020, it was revealed that Trinity held shares in Elbit Systems, a major supplier of drones to the Israeli military. Activists have since targeted the College for what they term "supporting Israeli genocide," intensifying calls for accountability. Although Trinity pledged to divest from all arms investments by the end of 2025, reports suggested a retreat from this commitment, as the College’s master affirmed a lack of interest in proceeding with divestment.

In addressing these contentious issues, a spokesperson for the Trinity College Student Union underscored their role in representing student interests, stating that they remain dedicated to advocating for divestment. This stance reflects an ongoing struggle within the University community, as students seek to align the institution’s financial activities with ethical and humanitarian principles.

As student demonstrations continue to escalate across various UK universities, the actions at Trinity College mirror a broader movement aimed at reassessing institutional investments in sectors that some deem complicit in political violence. Activists like those from C4P insist that their efforts are not only necessary but imperative, underlining a sentiment: “Palestinians deserve that we stand up for them.” Such declarations reaffirm a growing urgency for systemic change within the institutional policies surrounding ethical investment.

As tensions rise and protests develop, the question remains: will the University of Cambridge respond to these compelling calls for justice, or will it continue to face scrutiny for its associations and investment strategies?

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/29778), [[2]](https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/29778)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/29778), [[5]](https://www.cam.ac.uk/notices/news/upholding-our-values-responding-to-calls-from-our-university-community)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/29778), [[4]](https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/cambridge-university-students-protest-trinity-college-investing-israel-arms)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/29778), [[3]](https://www.cam.ac.uk/notices/news/working-group-on-investments-in-and-research-funded-by-companies-belonging-to-the-defence-industry)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://palestineaction.org/cambridge-action/), [[4]](https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/cambridge-university-students-protest-trinity-college-investing-israel-arms)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/29778), [[5]](https://www.cam.ac.uk/notices/news/upholding-our-values-responding-to-calls-from-our-university-community)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/29778> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/29778> - Pro-Palestinian activists established an encampment outside Trinity College, Cambridge, demanding the University divest from arms companies linked to Israel. Organised by Cambridge for Palestine (C4P), the protest aimed to challenge the University's alleged complicity in genocide by urging divestment from companies such as BAE Systems, Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and Rolls-Royce. The encampment was set up after the University blocked progress on divestment and adopted policies against protests. C4P also criticised the Whittle Lab's partnership with Rolls-Royce, highlighting concerns over the lab's involvement in climate initiatives while being associated with a company linked to military research. The protest follows previous actions by C4P, including occupations at Senate House Lawn and Greenwich House, aimed at preventing the University from stalling negotiations on divestment. The University has denied allegations that injunctions against protests restrict free speech, labelling such claims as 'ridiculous'.
3. <https://www.cam.ac.uk/notices/news/working-group-on-investments-in-and-research-funded-by-companies-belonging-to-the-defence-industry> - In response to protests, the University of Cambridge established a working group to review its investments in and research funded by companies in the defence industry. The group aims to make recommendations to relevant University committees overseeing policies related to investments and research. This initiative follows concerns raised by protesters about the University's investments in arms companies and its research partnerships with entities linked to the defence sector. ([cam.ac.uk](https://www.cam.ac.uk/notices/news/working-group-on-investments-in-and-research-funded-by-companies-belonging-to-the-defence-industry?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/cambridge-university-students-protest-trinity-college-investing-israel-arms> - Students at Cambridge University protested outside Trinity College, demanding divestment from companies involved in Israel's war on Gaza. The protest was triggered by revelations that Trinity College had invested £61,735 in Elbit Systems, Israel's largest arms company, and approximately $3.2 million in Caterpillar, a company supplying equipment to the Israeli army. Demonstrators carried signs reading 'Ceasefire now!' and 'Divest from genocide', calling for the University to end its financial ties with companies profiting from the conflict. ([middleeasteye.net](https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/cambridge-university-students-protest-trinity-college-investing-israel-arms?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.cam.ac.uk/notices/news/upholding-our-values-responding-to-calls-from-our-university-community> - The University of Cambridge addressed calls from its community regarding investments in the arms and defence industry. The University acknowledged the strength of feeling within the community and committed to working with the Task Force and the Working Group to review its approach to responsible investment. This includes consideration of ways to define and monitor defence exposures within investment portfolios. The outcome of this review and any proposed changes will be communicated to the Cambridge University Endowment Trustee Body within the specified timelines. ([cam.ac.uk](https://www.cam.ac.uk/notices/news/upholding-our-values-responding-to-calls-from-our-university-community?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://palestineaction.org/cambridge-action/> - In early March 2025, a group of autonomous students, in collaboration with Palestine Action, took direct action at Cambridge University in solidarity with Palestine. The action involved painting the Old Schools building, which manages the University's Endowment Fund, in blood-red paint. This protest followed a similar action at Oxford University and was part of a growing wave of confrontational actions at UK universities to hold them accountable for financial support of systems of violence and oppression. The protesters demanded immediate divestment from companies complicit in war crimes and the Israeli apartheid regime. ([palestineaction.org](https://palestineaction.org/cambridge-action/?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/28558> - The University of Cambridge delayed its review of arms investments, which was initiated following pro-Palestine protests. The delay led to accusations of 'back-pedalling' and 'watering down' commitments to students. The University published its terms of reference for the ongoing review, stating that the working group will complete its work by the end of the academic year. The review will consider the University's ties to arms in relation to national security and its position as a civic institution in the UK. The delay has been criticised by staff and students who have been advocating for divestment from arms companies. ([varsity.co.uk](https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/28558?utm_source=openai))