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Students punch, pelt, and set cars alight while security retaliates with force



ROCK WAR: Students blocking the Yale Road gate began throwing stones at the security guards trying to clear the entrance.

Splits
choke
Wits

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CHAOS erupted at Wits this morning with students and security guards pelting each other with stones and the burly men in black suits throttling and wrestling students to stop them from disrupting classes.

A bookshop and two vehicles were also set on fire in the early hours and access control mechanisms on turnstiles ripped off.

So incensed were the protesting students that they turned against everyone trying to enter the university, even assaulting a Star photographer.

They are against the university's decision to resume classes today despite issues that, they say, still need attention.

They blocked cars from driving into the university through the Yale Road gate, with some students jumping in front of a grey Kia and someone punching its hood.

When about 20 private security guards arrived shortly before 8am to try to clear the gates, attempts to try clear students from the Kia's path turned ugly, with security guards throttling and wrestling one of the students to the ground.

But the Kia still could not enter and security asked it to turn around.

Students then backed up inside the gate, and when security advanced, they began throwing rocks. The guards retaliated by throwing them back.

Students moved to higher ground next to the gate to gain advantage and the guards retreated.

By the time the skirmish was over, one security guard had lost his jacket, and his white shirt was spattered with blood.

The gates were still blocked by students, who placed cinder blocks in the middle of the road.

Another 40 protesters marched up to the gate from the middle of the camp to clap and sing struggle songs with their comrades.

"This is out of control now,"



TIGHT GRIP: Members of a private security company forcibly evict students from the security checkpoint. A fracas ensued between security officers and the students this morning. PICTURES: CHRIS COLLINGRIDGE

said a second-year nuclear energy student in frustration.

"The protests are divided. There are the ones that see the bigger picture and the ones that don't."

Protesting students declined to comment on the motivation behind the blockade, but from the past two days, it has become apparent that some feel the protest

were made "to burn two cars belonging to contractors, books in a bookshop in our student centre and start a fire outside the law library", but the fires were extinguished by Campus Control.

"We are looking at CCTV as we speak, talking to students on the ground and we are also appealing to anyone with information about last night," Patel said.

She confirmed there were no injuries, but the university could not confirm the cost of the damage.

She had a stern warning for those involved in last night's fires, saying once those responsible were found, they would be arrested.

Patel said a small group of protesters including outsourced workers and a group of students were still marching up and down campus this morning but that the situation was under control.

"There is security presence on the campus marching with them and the police are on standby."

Patel said the university was disappointed by the situation as the majority of students wanted to

come back today after two weeks of protesting. "There is a handful of students trying to disrupt classes and academic activities," she said.

Outgoing Student Representative Council (SRC) president Shaera Kalla tweeted in response to last night's vandalism saying: "Whatever your views around protest and violence are; at Wits, you will not win anything by being violent."

In a joint statement with incoming SRC President Nompndulo Mkhathshwa, she said: "We note the university released a statement saying a resolution was reached with the SRC. This is false. We must clarify that there have been no meetings or negotiations between management and the SRC at any point."

"That being said, the only firm decision-making platforms for the #FeesMustFall movement have been mass student meetings called by the SRC."

The pair could not be reached for comment on this morning's protest.



▶ Pages 6 and 15

should continue.

Police presence grew at the bottom of the hill on Enoch Sontonga Avenue as the morning progressed.

Spokeswoman for the university, Shirona Patel, said attempts

Outer place in Midrand

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A SUPPOSED UFO sighting in Midrand has caused a stir.

This after a picture of a strange circular-shaped object over clouds was shared on social media, apparently taken on the N1 in Midrand.

"Creepy", "scary" and "crazy" were just some of the words used to describe the object, with some even fearing alien invasion.

"We being attacked by UFO'S Natassja Leona I LOVE YOU I might not see you again," tweeted

@nazareneleov, with @Zoleka_Yo asking: "Why wasn't I abducted?"

Others, like @ZolaMayaba, said the UFO picture that had gone viral had her "on alert mode every time I'm on the road since I live in midrand", with @magan_maistry asking if the UFO spotted meant this was "going to be The X Files in South Africa version".

"UFO sighting in South Africa this is crazy," tweeted @LilSwissler.

But some users were more sceptical about the so-called sighting, also making light of it, with @NonoPN28 saying that as

much as she was all about researching UFOs, "the one 'spotted' in Midrand was fake".

"Lets not f around people. Smells like a Star Wars plugin," she added.

Twitter user @neomaja_jnr joked that it may be the Guptas, saying: "Is it a bird? nooo its Guptas... tired of planes trying spaceship" - while @gbelcpt asked whether it was "(President Jacob) Zuma's new form of transportation".

UFO Research of South Africa could not be reached for comment this morning.



GUESTS? People gaze up at a "UFO" in the Midrand sky. PICTURES: INSTAGRAM

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