

Advice on the collaborations with Israeli Universities

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1 Advice (short version)

Advice on collaborations with

Bar-Ilan University

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The University of Haifa

The Hamas-led attacks of 7 October 2023 and the ensuing war in Gaza have evoked strong sentiments and moral indignation among a substantial part of the EUR community, albeit with starkly opposing perspectives. This has led the Executive Board to request advice from the Advisory Committee for Sensitive Collaborations of Erasmus University Rotterdam. The committee has so far assessed ongoing and intended collaborations with three universities in Israel.

In line with the committee's assessment framework, and taking note of the debates about the university's position vis-à-vis the current situation in Israel-Palestine, the committee has assessed the context and advises the Executive Board to (re)affirm the following position:

1. The ever more credible indications of genocidal violence and repeated breaches of international humanitarian law by the Israeli government should be unequivocally condemned.
2. The brutal Hamas-led attacks of 7 October 2023, including the fact that innocent civilians are kept hostage until now, should also be unequivocally condemned, as terrorism can never be a legitimate aim or means.
3. The international condemnation of the occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel, of the ensuing systemic violations of human rights, and of the asymmetric and massive violence against Palestinians since October 2023, should be a reference point for EUR when deciding about its course of action.
4. The EUR policy on collaboration with external partners is based on academic freedom and science diplomacy, which implies that EUR encourages collaboration with partners worldwide unless such collaboration is contrary to national or international law and/or undermines our fundamental values and academic responsibility.
5. EUR acknowledges the right of students and staff members to freely express their opinions without harming the rights of others. As such, members of the EUR community have the right to sympathize with or advocate for the State of Israel and its citizens, and/or the recognition of the Palestinian state and the Palestinian people, just as they can sympathize with any other cause.
6. Universities in Israel should not be held to higher standards than universities in the Netherlands or elsewhere. It is also not the role of the university to engage in a boycott to further political aims. If, however, EUR's fundamental values and academic responsibility are compromised through such collaborations and partnerships, those

should be suspended or terminated. This is the case when universities are systemically entangled in, contributing to, condoning, or unduly benefiting from the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and/or war crimes.

General assessment

The Committee has assessed three universities in Israel in relation to the specific risks it has identified in its context assessment (restriction of freedom of expression, discrimination / exclusion, infringement of the right to self-determination and systematic entanglement) and the potential for 'science diplomacy'. The criterion used in the assessment is whether there are credible indications of involvement (whether direct or indirect) by the collaboration partner in serious and structural violations of human rights and/or international humanitarian law (including war crimes), or of academic values.

The term 'credible indications' refers to those situations where the available information leads the committee to conclude that involvement by the partner in serious and structural violations of human rights and international humanitarian law is likely. The term 'structural' refers to violations that are not incidental. The term 'involvement' is used to describe situations in which universities are systemically entangled in, contributing to, condoning, or unduly benefiting from these violations.

With regards to restriction of freedom of expression and discrimination / exclusion, the committee has looked at the available information and concluded that the reports on these issues do not amount to credible indications that one of these universities is involved in structural violations of these human rights. Although there are concerns, these do not meet the threshold for a negative advice about collaboration with these universities.

Regarding the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, especially in relation to activities in Occupied Palestinian Territories, the committee has looked at available information and concluded that – to varying degrees – the available information amounts to credible indications of involvement by the universities in structural violations of the right to self-determination.

Concerning systematic entanglement with the Israeli state and Israel Defense Forces (IDF), the committee looked at available information regarding the universities' collaboration with the IDF in the fields of military education and military technology research. The committee considers that such collaboration is, under normal circumstances, acceptable. However, in the context of strong international condemnation of the Occupation and the strong indications of genocidal violence in Gaza, universities should be expected to exercise extraordinary caution in their collaboration with the Israeli government and IDF and to take steps to prevent becoming involved in structural violations of human rights and/or international humanitarian law (including war crimes). The committee concludes that – to varying degrees – the available

information, or lack thereof, amounts to credible indications that the universities may be directly or indirectly involved in such violations. This leads to the following university-specific assessment and advice.

University-specific assessment and advice

Bar-Ilan University

There are credible indications of Bar Ilan University's direct involvement in structural violations of human rights and/or international humanitarian law (including war crimes) both with respect to its excavation activities in Occupied Territory and with respect to its structural entanglement with the State of Israel and IDF in military technology research and in education. Under these circumstances, collaboration with Bar-Ilan University puts the EUR in a position in which it may become indirectly connected to these violations, which would in turn seriously compromise the fundamental values and academic responsibilities of the EUR. This leads the committee to conclude that the EUR should take steps to exclude its own connection to these risks.

The committee advises the EUR Executive Board:

- not to engage in new partnerships or collaborations with Bar-Ilan University, and
- to suspend the existing exchange programme,
- until conversations with the Bar-Ilan University leadership and reassessment based on evidence provided by Bar-Ilan University lead to the conclusion that the risk of involvement in human rights violations as mentioned above has subsided, and
- to make sure that the validity of this advice and decision remains monitored annually.

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

There are credible indications of Hebrew University's involvement in structural violations of human rights and/or international humanitarian law (including war crimes), directly with respect to its physical presence in Occupied Palestinian Territory (especially on land acquired since the Occupation in 1967) and indirectly with respect to its structural entanglement with the State of Israel and the IDF through its military programmes. Under these circumstances, collaboration with Hebrew University puts the EUR in a position in which it may become indirectly connected to these violations, which would in turn seriously compromise the fundamental values and academic responsibilities of the EUR.

This leads the committee to conclude that the EUR should take steps to reduce its own connection to these risks until Hebrew University can show that it has taken adequate measures to ensure that:

- its physical presence on Occupied Palestinian Territory is accompanied by remedial and/or reconciliatory programmes, and
- its cooperation with the IDF and the military presence on campus no longer exposes Hebrew University to potential involvement in violations of human rights and/or international humanitarian law (including war crimes).

The committee advises the EUR Executive Board

- to engage within three months in conversation with Hebrew University based on their stated shared adherence to fundamental human rights and international humanitarian law, about remedial and/or reconciliatory actions in relation to the use of expropriated lands on Occupied Palestinian Territory, and the steps it takes to prevent involvement in violations of human rights and/or humanitarian law (including war crimes) through its collaboration with IDF and/or the military presence on campus,
- not to engage in new research collaborations or exchange programmes with Hebrew University,
- to minimize collaborations in existing research consortia or exchange programmes as mentioned in this assessment, insofar as the collaboration agreements allow for this,
- until the conversations with Hebrew University and a reassessment based on information provided by Hebrew University lead to the conclusion that the risk of involvement in human rights violations as mentioned above has subsided and/or that Hebrew University is taking adequate measures to minimize this risk,
- or, conversely, if Hebrew University is not taking adequate measures to uphold its academic responsibility in the current context of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, to suspend the existing collaborations, and
- make sure that the validity of this advice and decision remains monitored annually.

University of Haifa

There are credible indications of University of Haifa's involvement in structural violations of human rights and/or international humanitarian law (including war crimes), directly with respect to its excavation activities in Occupied Palestinian Territory and indirectly with respect to its structural entanglement with the State of Israel and the IDF through its military colleges. Under these circumstances, collaboration with the University of Haifa puts the EUR in a position in which it may become indirectly connected to these violations, which would in turn seriously compromise the fundamental values and academic responsibilities of the EUR.

This leads the committee to conclude that the EUR should take steps to reduce its own connection to these risks until the University of Haifa can show that it has taken adequate measures to ensure that:

- its excavation activities in Occupied Palestinian Territory comply with the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, and
- its cooperation with the IDF and the military presence on campus no longer exposes the University of Haifa to potential involvement in violations of human rights and/or international humanitarian law (including war crimes).

The committee therefore advises the EUR Executive Board:

- to engage within three months in conversations with the University of Haifa based on their stated shared adherence to fundamental human rights and international humanitarian law, about the steps it takes to prevent infringement of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people and to prevent involvement in violations of human rights and/or humanitarian law (including war crimes) through its collaboration with IDF and/or the military presence on campus,
- not to engage in new partnerships or collaborations with the University of Haifa, and
- to minimize collaboration in existing research consortia or exchange programmes as mentioned in this assessment insofar as the collaboration agreements allow for this,
- until the conversations with University of Haifa and a reassessment based on information provided by the University of Haifa lead to the conclusion that the risk of involvement in human rights violations as mentioned above have subsided, and/or that Hebrew University is taking adequate measures to minimize this risk,
- or, conversely, if the University of Haifa is not taking adequate measures to uphold its academic responsibility in the current context of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, to suspend the existing collaborations, and
- make sure that the validity of this advice and decision remains monitored annually.

2 Full Assessments

2.1 Context Assessment¹

Introduction

The assessment of sensitive collaborations starts with an assessment of the broader context in which such collaborations take place and in which specific risks are identified. In the context of Israel and Palestine this requires caution in the selection of relevant knowledge and sources in the awareness that most information is filtered through specific – often opposing – political perspectives. To come to a balanced view, we need to acknowledge these perspectives and the long history of the conflict, while avoiding political interpretations where possible. In this regard, the committee considers the following.

Historical background and status

The history of the conflict between Israel and Palestine is long, often violent, and deeply connected with international support for and influence on the different parties. After the British disengagement from its mandate territories, Israel became an independent state in May 1948, recognized by the United Nations (UN). Following the so-called Six Day War of June 1967, Israel occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank (previously controlled by Jordan), the Gaza Strip (then administered by Egypt) and the Golan Heights (until then part of Syria). Cycles of violent conflict between Israel and its neighbors (and, over time, increasingly non-state actors supported by other regional powers) translated into elevated threat perception, and constant presence of risk in everyday life of residents. Israel has, until today, conscription, and military service is seen as an important contribution to the safety of the Israeli society.

In November 1988, the Palestinian National Council (later Palestinian Authority) declared the independence of the State of Palestine. It has since been recognized by 146 UN member states (including four EU member states, but not the Netherlands). The status of Palestine as “Occupied Territory” has been explicitly acknowledged by, among others, the UN (since 1999), the International Court of Justice (ICJ, since 2004)², and the EU (since the 1980 Venice Declaration and the Oslo Accords of 1993).

¹ This context assessment was published 01-04-2025. This updated version includes a paragraph on archeological excavations in occupied territories.

² In its advisory opinions "Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory" (2004, www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/131/131-20040709-ADV-01-00-EN.pdf) and "Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem" (2024, www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/186/186-20240719-adv-01-00-en.pdf).

In 2005, Israel disengaged from Gaza. It maintains that this brought an end to its obligations under international law as an occupying power. This legal interpretation has been upheld by some legal scholars and systematically by Israeli courts. By contrast, other scholars and numerous institutions, including the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (ICRC), maintain that Israel continues to be bound by at least some obligations as an occupying power. This view was upheld by the ICJ in its Advisory Opinion in July 2024, in which it decided that, regardless of whether Gaza was still legally speaking occupied or not, Israel indeed continued to be bound by at least some of its obligations as an occupying power.³

The current stage of the conflict is marked by the war triggered by the Hamas-led terrorist attacks of 7 October 2023 and Israel's massive violence in response, which lasted at least until the moment this assessment was made (May 2025).

Presently, the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) consist of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza. East Jerusalem has been integrated administratively by Israel, which was condemned internationally as contravening the Fourth Geneva Convention (UNSC resolution 446 of 1979). Other parts of the West Bank are governed by different jurisdictional arrangements: the smallest part (Area A, 17,2%) is governed by the Palestinian Authority (PA); Area B (23.8%) is under PA civil control and Israeli security control; and Area C (59%) falls under full Israeli control. It is important to note that even the parts governed by the Palestinian Authority are fully surrounded by area under Israel's military control and that anyone living in OPT needs authorization from Israel should they wish to commute in, out, or between these areas. As for Gaza, Israel does not execute full control over its territory, but it does control its borders and sea access. This means that Israel in practice maintains a large degree of control over all the Occupied Palestinian territories even where it formally does not execute full control.

The committee considers this asymmetric relationship between Israel and Palestine and the ensuing (partial) responsibility of Israel for the occupied Palestinian territories an important factor for the risk assessment and the degree to which each party can be considered responsible for risks of human rights and humanitarian law violations.

Assessment of risks of violations of human rights and humanitarian law

The human rights and humanitarian law violations related to the occupation of Palestine by Israel take different forms. In areas of the West Bank, the violations include settler policies and forced displacement, heavy policing, isolation of the population through the (internationally condemned) West Bank barrier and movement limiting checkpoints, military operations and

³ <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/leiden-journal-of-international-law/article/armed-conflict-in-gaza-and-its-complexity-under-international-law-jus-ad-bellum-jus-in-bello-and-international-justice/9C3594273B2ADCE26A9E89E8A361DB3D>

unlawful killings, intensified after the 7 October attacks on Israel.⁴ In its advisory opinion of July 2024, the ICJ stated that “Israel’s legislation and measures constitute a breach of Article 3 of CERD”⁵ with regard to the “near-complete separation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem between the settler and Palestinian communities”.⁶ Access to social services and healthcare on the West Bank is limited, especially when people need care outside their region of residence and require travel permits issued by the Israeli government.⁷ A recent report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights concludes that the Government of Israel unlawfully facilitates the consolidation and expansion of Israeli settlements and dire consequences for the human rights of the Palestinian people, including the denial of their right to self-determination.⁸ The international community has systematically condemned Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including via UNSC resolutions 242 (of 1967), 338 (1973), 476 (of 1980), 1397 (2002), 2334 (of 2016) and, therefore, does not recognize them as a legitimate part of Israel. Similarly, the EU does not support academic collaboration with Israeli partners located in any of the occupied territories.

According to International Humanitarian Law (notably The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict from 1954 but resonating in various other Conventions⁹), archaeological excavations are not prohibited, but cultural sites and cultural assets should be protected and removal of cultural property from the occupied territory is prohibited. Local authorities should have priority in undertaking salvage excavations, and the occupying power should cooperate with the local authorities to the extent possible. According to the Second Protocol (Article 9) to this Convention, the occupying power “shall prohibit and prevent in relation to the occupied territory: (a) any illicit export, other removal or transfer of ownership of cultural property; (b) any archaeological excavation, save where this is strictly required to safeguard, record or preserve cultural property; (c) any alteration to, or change of use of, cultural property which is intended to conceal or destroy cultural, historical or scientific evidence.”

In the case of Gaza, matters are significantly worse. Even before the current war, experts and international institutions globally describe the situation as a humanitarian disaster and a context of severe human rights violations.¹⁰ Access to health care is problematic due to military violence, poverty and hunger, destruction of health care facilities, power cuts, death tolls among medical staff, and lack of materials. Since 7 October 2023, the health care system has all but collapsed. In the context of the current war, the ICJ gave an order regarding a request for provisional

⁴ As reported a.o., by Amnesty International. www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/08/israel-opt-palestinians-face-drastic-escalation-in-unlawful-killings-displacement-as-israel-launches-west-bank-military-operation/

⁵ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; art 3 regards racial segregation and apartheid

⁶ www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/186/186-20240719-adv-01-00-en.pdf

⁷ www.emro.who.int/opt/information-resources/right-to-health.html

⁸ *Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan*. Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 06-03-2025. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session58/advance-version/a-hrc-58-73-aev-1.pdf>

⁹ See Stahl (2017) for an overview of applicable international and domestic law.

¹⁰ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/07/dismantle-israels-carceral-regime-and-open-air-imprisonment-palestinians-un>

measure by South Africa, which has accused Israel of committing genocide in Gaza. Although the ICJ did not order Israel to withdraw from Gaza, it did order Israel as an interim measure to “immediately halt its military offensive and any other action in the Rafah Governorate, which may inflict on the Palestinian group in Gaza conditions of life that could bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part”.¹¹ The ICC has issued arrest warrants for Israel’s prime minister and former defense minister, together with former Hamas commanders, citing allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity.¹²

Israel scores relatively well on human rights indices, as these often measure respect for human rights within the borders of the country itself (thus excluding the occupied territory). In this sense, Israel does meet the major criteria of a modern Western democracy. For example, the V-Dem Democracy Report 2025 classifies Israel as an ‘electoral democracy’ whereas Freedom House indicates that Israel scores 34/40 on political rights and 39/60 on civil rights, marking it as a “free” country¹³. These rankings do not deny the risks of human rights violations for individuals in Israel (especially for non-Jewish and/or non-Israeli residents), who, despite anti-discrimination laws, experience everyday racism and discrimination.¹⁴ In recent years, Israeli society experienced widespread protests against the government of PM Netanyahu who attempted to constrain judicial review in order to enlarge executive and legislative power.

The situation is worse in the occupied territories. The West Bank is considered an ‘electoral autocracy’ by V-Dem and scored by Freedom House as ‘not free’, with 4/40 for political rights and 18/60 for civil rights. The 2024 Freedom House report indicates both Israeli military occupation, and Palestinian Authority’s “authoritarian manner” of governance as reasons for this low score.¹⁵ Gaza is ranked as a ‘closed autocracy’ by V-Dem¹⁶ and, according to Freedom House scores -2/40 for political rights and 4/60 for civil rights, similarly marking it as “not free”.¹⁷ In Gaza, Israeli blockades “imposed serious hardship on the civilian population”, further exacerbated by Hamas’ authoritarian rule.¹⁸

The difference between the human rights protection of the Israeli population and that of the population and institutions in the occupied territories is reason to be careful when interpreting the indices mentioned above and not to take them out of context. Given the asymmetric situation and the ongoing military occupation as described above, the committee considers that Israel is partially responsible for the alarming human rights situation in the occupied territories, without denying the role and responsibility of the Palestinian Authority and Hamas.

¹¹ <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240524-pre-01-00-en.pdf>

¹² <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/11/1157286>

¹³ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/israel>

¹⁴ See for example Israeli political and legal geographer and human rights activist Oren Yiftachel, who speaks of Israel as “an illusion of democracy despite ruling over millions of Palestinians who are either ‘temporarily’ under military occupation, or possess a second-class citizenship”. O. Yiftachel (2023) ‘Deepening apartheid: The political geography of colonizing Israel/Palestine’. *Frontiers in Political Science* 2022(4). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2022.981867>. See for a broader analysis of Israel as a democracy Dowty, A. (2021). ‘Democracy in Israel’. In Hazan, R. Y., Dowty, A., Hofnung, M., & Rahat, G. (Eds.). (2021). *The Oxford handbook of Israeli politics and society*. Oxford University Press, USA.

¹⁵ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/west-bank/freedom-world/2024>

¹⁶ <https://www.v-dem.net/publications/democracy-reports/>

¹⁷ <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>

¹⁸ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/gaza-strip/freedom-world/2024>

The committee is convinced that the present situation entails severe risks of a broad range of human rights violations. The killing and taking hostage of Israeli citizens on 7 October 2023, as well as suicide bombings and rocket attacks constitute violations of human rights. The military violence, displacement, unlawful killings, and restrictions imposed on Palestinian citizens in the context of the ongoing military occupation also constitute violations of human rights and of International Humanitarian Law as expressed in the fourth Geneva Convention¹⁹. The bombing of Gaza and withholding elementary aid may amount to war crimes and violations of humanitarian law.

Assessment of risks for EUR values and academic freedom

The academic freedom index score for Israel is 0,84, which is comparable to or better than most western-European countries (and higher than the Netherlands at 0,76), while Palestine ranks much lower at 0,35 and Gaza at 0,13.²⁰ The committee again considers that Israeli military occupation contributes to this low score and is concerned about the situation of scholars, students and academic institutions in Palestine, especially in Gaza.

The committee acknowledges that in both West Bank and Gaza, universities have been historically associated with national politics, and formal protections of academic freedom in Palestine are limited.²¹ The context of occupation worsens the situation of Palestinian universities, as is almost universally agreed by academic literature. Academic institutions in the West Bank are underfinanced, heavily controlled by Israeli and Palestinian authorities, subject to police interventions directed at *inter alia*²² active students and in general struggle with academic freedom because of the political context. As for Gaza, the situation is comparably complex, and in the context of the current war, the UN experts speak of 'scholasticide'²³ given the extent of the destruction of schools, universities, and libraries and the death toll among educators and students. Because of the isolation of West Bank, universities and the destruction of universities in Gaza, their access to education and international collaboration are severely limited.

The situation of universities in Israel is quite different. They must deal with political tensions and the continuing fear of incoming missiles, but their regular functioning is not threatened in the same way. International pressure in the academic and political communities is starting to affect universities in Israel. The committee acknowledges the wider political context in which Israel has an association agreement with the EU, which facilitates economic and academic collaboration and allows universities in Israel to participate in e.g., Horizon grant applications. Recent

¹⁹ <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949>

²⁰ https://v-dem.net/data_analysis/MapGraph/ See also [Academic Freedom Index Update 2025.pdf](#) which shows a statistically significant decline for Israel since 2014, although it still has a higher score than the Netherlands.

²¹ Milton, S., Elkahlout, G., & Barakat, S. (2021). Protecting higher education from attack in the Gaza Strip. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 53(6), 1024–1042.

²² See for example the report from Palestine Polytechnic University to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/education/cfis/cfi-expression/subm-academic-freedom-cso-palestine-polytechnic-university.docx

²³ www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/04/un-experts-deeply-concerned-over-scholasticide-gaza

statements by the European Commission underscored that removing Israeli partners on the basis of nationality alone “could amount to discrimination”.²⁴ Given the current human rights situation, the European Commission is starting investigations whether Israel still complies with the association agreement.

The committee considers that cooperation with partners in Israel and Palestine involves a risk that EUR values could be compromised. Even if a specific collaboration may seem positive on project-level, collaboration with partners in Israel and Palestine implies engagement with a context that is fraught with violence, inequity, and severe risk of human rights violations. Global citizenship, academic freedom and academic integrity are values that are easily compromised in this context on both sides. Because of the asymmetries, the risks of becoming victim to violations are higher for scholars and students in Palestine.

Assessment of risks for safety and knowledge security

The committee considers that the context also entails safety and knowledge security risks that may require additional advice from the respective policy officers within EUR. This may be relevant for specific project collaborations, depending on the kind of knowledge being generated or shared in a project and the degree of exposure to safety risks. It is not necessarily the case for each project. When such risks are expected in a particular project, this additional advice should be sought.

Concluding implications

In assessing individual universities, the committee needs to balance two perspectives: on the one hand, it would be unfair to demand higher levels of living up to our values than we would require from partners in other contexts. From this perspective, it should be sufficient for a partner university if it doesn't itself violate human rights and humanitarian principles. On the other hand, in a context where everything has been politicized for such a long time and where the occupation of Palestinian territories is at the heart of power asymmetry, even neutrality is a political stance that functions as siding with the more powerful party. From this perspective, we should look for indications that a partner university actively and explicitly endorses and complies with international Human Rights laws and humanitarian principles. The committee will take both these perspectives into account.

Given its assessment of the relevant risks in the context of Israel and Palestine, the committee considers that collaboration with partners in this context requires substantial caution. This caution plays out differently for partners in Palestine than for partners in Israel because of the asymmetric relationship between Israel and Palestine, the systemic nature of the

²⁴ <https://sciencebusiness.net/news/horizon-europe/kicking-israeli-researchers-horizon-projects-could-amount-discrimination-says>. As mentioned above, this does not include Israeli institutions located in occupied territory.

(internationally acknowledged) occupation of Palestinian territory, and the ensuing violence of occupying forces.

For partners in Israel, the question should not only be whether the collaboration project itself may be beneficial. Given the gravity of the risk of violations of human rights and humanitarian law related to the occupation of Palestine by Israel, project assessment must be combined with an investigation whether the university is systemically entangled in, contributing to, condoning, or unduly benefiting from such violations. The committee considers this relevant for EUR collaborations, not as a means to exert political influence on Israel, but because maintaining its own academic integrity and responsibility should impact the choice of partners it can reasonably collaborate with.

For partners in Palestine, working under the duress of occupation and restrictive policies of their respective authorities, the default response would be positive when the collaboration project is considered beneficial for society and contributes positively to the strength and freedom of the academic sector, and provided there are no indications that the partner is involved in or supports terrorist actions.

2.2 Assessment Bar-Ilan University

Background information about Bar-Ilan University

Bar-Ilan University, established in 1955 by American Jews, is located in Ramat-Gan (Tel Aviv district). It is one of the major research universities in Israel with a strong reputation in especially the exact sciences. It attracts both Jewish and non-Jewish students. Bar-Ilan has branched out into five regional colleges in Ashkelon, Kinneret, Safed, Acre, and Ariel. The latter, located in Occupied Territory on the West Bank, has developed into an autonomous university which, for reasons of its location, is the only Israeli university ineligible for EU research funding. Bar-Ilan University also offers community outreach courses in Bnei Brak and Jerusalem for religious Orthodox men and women.²⁵

Named after religious Zionist leader Rabbi Meir Bar-Ilan (Berlin), the identity of the university is based on the “integration of Jewish heritage and science”. Jewish students are expected to take specific courses on Jewish identity in combination with their chosen field of studies, because “Jewish identity is critical both for Israeli citizens who are called upon to debate the value of their state’s dual, Jewish and democratic character, as well as to preserve a relationship with Diaspora Jewish communities.”²⁶ Bar-Ilan offers a specific one-year programme for Jewish students from abroad, strengthening their knowledge of their heritage and their identity.²⁷

Bar-Ilan University is a broad university with nine faculties for humanities, social sciences, medicine, exact sciences and engineering, and Jewish and Torah studies. Currently around 21,000 students are enrolled, including around 1,600 Arab students and 900 international students.²⁸ The website mentions 58 student exchange programmes in Europe, which may not be a complete list as it does not list EUR, nor universities in the UK or outside Europe.²⁹

Bar-Ilan University is a public university, funded in majority by the Israeli government. The University is governed by an international Board of Trustees with a Permanent Committee of 13 external members and the rector, president and chair of the senate as ex officio members. The Senate, consisting of academic staff, ex officio office holders, and student representatives, is the supreme academic authority. The President and Rector report to the Executive Committee (and the Rector also to the Senate).

Collaborations of EUR with Bar-Ilan University

This assessment was prioritized because of a request to advise on an intended collaboration which, in the end, was not pursued. The only existing collaboration with Bar-Ilan university, that the committee is aware of, is a student exchange programme for students of the Erasmus School

²⁵ <https://www.biu.ac.il/en/about-bar-ilan/overview/historical-milestones>

²⁶ <https://www.biu.ac.il/en/about-bar-ilan/jewish-heritage/about>

²⁷ <https://www.biu.ac.il/en/about-bar-ilan/jewish-heritage/israel-xp>

²⁸ <https://www.biu.ac.il/en/about-bar-ilan>

²⁹ <https://biuinternational.com/our-partners-around-the-world/>

of Law that accommodated four incoming students/staff and one outgoing student in 2023-2024 and no exchanges in 2024-2025.

Assessment of the connection between Bar-Ilan University and the identified risks

Based on the risks identified in the context assessment of Israel / Palestine and the scan of available information about Bar-Ilan University in light of the topics in the assessment model (focusing on the recent past and especially the current situation post Oct 7, 2023), the following observations can be made regarding how Bar-Ilan University acts in relation to discrimination and inclusion, the right to self-determination, and systematic entanglement of the university with the State of Israel and the IDF. In addition, the committee has considered the efforts of Bar-Ilan University in overcoming polarization (science diplomacy). The observations are not meant to be exhaustive but are aimed at establishing whether there is credible ground to assume that risks exist of involvement by Bar-Ilan University in structural human rights violations or violations of academic values.

1. Freedom of expression

The committee has noted internal debate at Bar-Ilan University with regard to the occupation. Staff at Bar-Ilan has a history of speaking out against Israel's policies in Occupied Palestinian Territories. In early 2007, professors at Bar-Ilan rebuked or refused to accommodate students who were participating in controversial military missions as a part of their IDF duties.³⁰ In 2014, a law professor was rebuked after he expressed concern for Palestinian and Israeli victims of violence.³¹ In June 2023, 160 members of staff at Bar-Ilan University signed an open letter condemning settler violence against Palestinians. "There is not, and cannot be, any justification for intentional harm to the body, soul and property of innocent people," the academics wrote, declaring that "this is not the way of the Torah."³² The committee considers that these circumstances do not constitute an indication of structural infringements on the freedom of expression by Bar-Ilan University.

2. Discrimination / inclusion

Although the number of Arab students at Bar-Ilan University is relatively small, the University boasts a support programme for those students that are not proficient in Hebrew as well as a department of Arabic, including Muslim Theology.³³ There are a few indications of discriminatory events to which the University responded appropriately.³⁴ Bar-Ilan University has

³⁰ <https://www.jpost.com/israel/bar-ilan-again-forced-to-deal-with-the-extremists-in-its-midst>

³¹ <https://law.acri.org.il/en/2014/07/31/bar-ilan-gaza/>

³² <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-06-28/ty-article/.premium/faculty-at-religiously-oriented-israeli-university-condemn-settler-violence/00000189-019e-dc2d-abcd-63fe0cd60000>

³³ <https://dean.biu.ac.il/en/node/47> ; <https://arabic.biu.ac.il/en>

³⁴ <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2021-11-02/ty-article/.premium/arab-students-at-israeli-university-protest-language-requirement-for-mentor-scheme/0000017f-dc37-df9c-a17f-fe3ff68f0000>; <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/bar-ilan-condemns-professor-who-forced-hijab-wearing-student-out-of-class-510916>; <https://mondoweiss.net/2020/10/bar-ilan-university-warns-jewish-students-of-palestinian-students/>

engaged in initiatives that foster Jewish-Arab dialogue in high schools³⁵ and on campus.³⁶ Since the 1990s, Bar-Ilan has organized the Project for Arab-Jewish Dialogue³⁷, which over time morphed into a Dialogue Programme.³⁸ Following Hamas-led terrorist attacks of 7 October 2023, Bar-Ilan intensified this programme, and continues to offer courses such as “Jewish-Arab Interreligious Dialogue.”³⁹ Nevertheless, the number of Arab scholars employed by Bar-Ilan University is among the lowest in Israeli universities.⁴⁰ The committee considers that these circumstances do not constitute an indication of structural discrimination by Bar-Ilan University.

3. *The right to self-determination*

In the context of the continued occupation of Palestinian territory and the facilitation of illegal settlements by the Israeli state, the preservation of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people is a crucial dimension of human rights that should also be observed by universities.

Bar-Ilan University founded in 1982 the “Judea and Samaria College” which later became Ariel University. This was one of the first Israeli academic institutions in Occupied Palestinian Territory. In 2012, Bar-Ilan University – together with other universities – resisted the formal recognition of Ariel University (mostly because of financial implications), but it later pulled its signature from the petition because it did not want to take legal action against a partner institute.⁴¹

Bar-Ilan has an active archeological programme in the Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology.⁴² There is a history of excavations in Occupied Territory, for example in Tel Shiloh-Khirbet Seilun (1981, later resumed by Ariel University), Khirbet al-Mazra’a (1998 in the process of establishing the illegal settlement outpost of Amona)⁴³, in Hirbet Jib’it and Wadi er-Rashash (2022)⁴⁴ and in Khirbet Tibnah near Nabi Salih. While there is a dispute about the ownership of the land⁴⁵, it is undisputable that archeological digs on occupied land are problematic from the

³⁵ <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-789721&ved=2ahUKEWiOs7yZ2NmMAXL1QIHfryMmYQFnoECBgQAQ&usg=AOvVaw3vOTdDh6i-itXfhQ2QiRhF>

³⁶ <https://www.biu.ac.il/en/article/580815>

³⁷ <https://pluralism.org/project-arab-jewish-dialogue-bar-islan-university>

³⁸ <https://www.biu.ac.il/en/news/9425>

³⁹ <https://www.biu.ac.il/en/article/580705>

⁴⁰ Nohad A’li. (2017). Inequality in the Ivory Tower: Sub-Representation of Arab Citizens in Israeli Universities. *Journal of Cultural and Religious Studies*, 5(1), p.49.

<https://www.davidpublisher.com/Public/uploads/Contribute/59390c22d87be.pdf>

⁴¹ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/bar-ilan-university-retracts-signature-from-petition-against-ariel-upgrage/>

⁴² <https://lisa.biu.ac.il>

⁴³ Z. Stahl (2017) *Appropriating the Past. Israel’s Archaeological Practices in the West Bank*. Published by Emek Shaveh and Yesh Din. <https://emekshaveh.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Menachsim-Eng-Web.pdf>

⁴⁴ <https://www.biu.ac.il/en/article/9348>

⁴⁵ <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2022-08-10/ty-article/.highlight/israeli-university-holds-archaeological-dig-in-west-bank-area-claimed-to-be-palestinian/00000182-7744-d2f5-a3e6-ff5d52080000> ; <https://emekshaveh.org/en/tel-tibna/>

point of view of international law, unless they are executed with approval of the Palestinian authorities and to the benefit of the Palestinian people.

The committee considers it a point of concern that Bar-Ilan University systematically engages in excavation activities in Occupied Palestinian Territory that are not clearly undertaken with approval by the Palestinian authorities nor to the benefit of the Palestinian population. The committee considers that this constitutes a credible indication of Bar-Ilan's involvement in a structural infringement of the right to self-determination.

4. *Systematic entanglement*

Like other universities, Bar-Ilan University offers support for members, reservists and veterans of the security forces. These include scholarships⁴⁶, emergency funds⁴⁷ and special admission tracks.⁴⁸ Both the president⁴⁹ and the vice-rector⁵⁰ have responded to the Hamas-led attacks of 7 October 2023 expressing full support for the military actions and blaming Hamas. Bar-Ilan University reports positively about a student initiative to “leverage AI technologies for using anti-Israel videos to generate pro-Israel content.” “The project utilizes AI to analyse anti-Israeli videos, extracting the discussed topic and automatically generate a response video countering the claims against Israel.”⁵¹

Research conducted at Bar-Ilan was in 2018 showcased for its contributions to military operations as being “employed by the IDF in patrolling the dangerous borders and tunnels of the Gaza strip.”⁵² Similarly, the president’s report 2022 highlighted advances in Natural Language Processing that serve the security forces for “better and faster identification of potential threats from within” and “electronics systems that underlie our security controls, military networks, and power grids.”⁵³ Together with the Technion, Bar-Ilan University collaborates in the field of data sciences with the IDF, focusing on data science, coding, and programming for military application, including the “Bareket” Master’s programme in the “IDF academic reserve track”.⁵⁴ Bar-Ilan University organizes events like ‘hackathons’ and ‘biothons’ together with the Israeli military, the Administration for the Development of Weapons and Technological Infrastructure and with Elbit Systems, Israel’s largest arms producer.⁵⁵ Elbit’s chief scientist underlined the importance of these collaborations to preserve their technological edge after a 2019 meeting at Bar-Ilan University: “These meetings are one of the tools that Elbit uses

⁴⁶ <https://prod-azure.biu.ac.il/en/article/11369>

⁴⁷ <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-770999>

⁴⁸ <https://www.biu.ac.il/en/article/304508>

⁴⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txF5NmGBob4> (official video by the Bar-Ilan university)

⁵⁰ https://www.facebook.com/arie.reich/posts/10227236781480133?ref=embed_post

⁵¹ <https://www.biu.ac.il/en/article/31368>

⁵² <https://afbiu.org/newsletter/2018-at-bar-ilan/ai-and-israeli-security>

⁵³ <https://www.biu.ac.il/sites/default/files/2022-president-report/52/index.html>

⁵⁴ <https://www.technion.ac.il/en/blog/category/uncategorized/page/26/>

⁵⁵ <https://engineering.biu.ac.il/en/node/11822>; <https://www.biu.ac.il/en/article/13072>

in order to maintain technological leadership, monitor emerging and breakthrough technologies, and provide feedback to academia on the needs of industry”.⁵⁶

The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, established by Bar-Ilan University, is positioned as an independent think tank “conducting policy-relevant research on Middle Eastern and global strategic affairs, particularly as they relate to the national security and foreign policy of Israel and regional peace and stability.”⁵⁷ Many of its researchers had a successful career in the IDF. The Center claims to have played a role to put on the public agenda issues like the “dangers of radical Islam; the myths of Palestinian demography; the abuse of international institutions in the attempt to delegitimize Israel.”⁵⁸ A paper released by the Center in 2018 argued that only ‘a fourth massive round of fighting against Hamas’ would make Hamas realize ‘that the pain to be suffered is so great, and the chance of eliminating the Jewish state so slim, as to render further violence pointless.’⁵⁹ ‘Now, alas,’ the paper concluded, ‘is the time for war.’ After operation Guardian of the Walls in 2021, one BESA Center paper advocated boycotting Palestinians⁶⁰; another warned against any Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank.⁶¹

The committee considers that under normal circumstances collaboration with the army for the sole purposes of academic education is in itself not an infringement of human rights or the fundamental values of the university. The degree to which Bar-Ilan University collaborates with the army is very high and in various cases aimed at developing technologies that are meant to be used in military operations. Given the fact that the prolonged and intense military actions in Gaza have met with severe international criticism because of strong indications that they are being executed in ways that amount to war crimes and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, extraordinary caution should be expected regarding continued collaboration with the IDF. The committee did not observe any indications of such critical caution or serious efforts of Bar-Ilan University to prevent becoming involved in violations of human rights and international humanitarian law related to the occupation and the war in Gaza through its collaboration with the IDF.

The committee considers that this constitutes a credible indication of Bar Ilan University's systematic entanglement with the State of Israel and the IDF and direct involvement in developing technologies that may contribute to violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

⁵⁶ <https://birad.biz/technologies-developed-by-bar-ilan-university-researchers-attracts-the-attention-of-elbit-systems/>

⁵⁷ <https://besacenter.org/about/mission/>

⁵⁸ <https://besacenter.org/about/history/>

⁵⁹ <https://besacenter.org/gaza-fighting-extortion/>

⁶⁰ [Boycott Palestine](#)

⁶¹ [Lessons of the Gaza War](#). See also Riemer, N. (2023). *Boycott Theory and the Struggle for Palestine Universities, Intellectualism and Liberation*. Rowman & Littlefield Unlimited Model.

<https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/PublicFullRecord.aspx?p=7150789>

<https://overland.org.au/2023/05/universities-as-tools-of-apartheid/>. See also for an example

<https://besacenter.org/palestinians-hopeless-terror-declines-hopeful-terrorism-increases/>

5. *Science diplomacy*

Bar-Ilan University is committed to building bridges between different constituencies on campus and in society.⁶² The committee noted that a course on Jewish-Arab was taught in cooperation with the Palestinian Universities of Hebron and Al-Quds between 1994 and 2020. Apparently, the cooperation was terminated since, but the course is still on offer.⁶³ Bar-Ilan University has started an initiative to counter academic boycotts, stressing that targeting Israeli universities is against the inclusive, solidarity and liberal values of universities around the world, and claiming that academic boycotts add to polarization and support extremist views. A committee was set up by Bar-Ilan University to do research, create strategic documents, support staff and ultimately prevent or fight boycotts.⁶⁴

The committee considers that Bar-Ilan University does engage in activities building bridges between communities. The committee did not observe recent collaborations with Palestinian academic institutions.

Conclusion and Advice

The committee has noted Bar-Ilan University's efforts towards dialogue and its adequate responses to instances of discrimination. The committee has found credible indications of potential violations of the right to self-determination of Palestine, notably by engaging frequently in activities in Occupied Territory. In the absence of evidence that these activities are undertaken in agreement and/or cooperation with local Palestinian authorities and to the benefit of the Palestinian population, this amounts to credible indications of Bar-Ilan University's involvement in human rights violations or violations of academic values.

The committee has found credible indications of Bar-Ilan University's systematic entanglement with the State of Israel and the IDF, security forces and private companies in the context of research for military technology, in the activities of the BESA center, and in the Bareket educational programme. In the context of serious allegations that military actions of the IDF may amount to war crimes and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and/or war crimes, the committee considers that these collaborations amount to credible indications of Bar-Ilan University's direct involvement in human rights violations or violations of academic values.

Overall, the committee considers that there are credible indications of Bar-Ilan University's direct involvement in structural violations of human rights and/or international humanitarian law (including war crimes) both with respect to its excavation activities in Occupied Territory and with respect to its structural entanglement with the State of Israel and IDF in military technology research and in education. Under these circumstances, collaboration with Bar-Ilan

⁶² <https://www.biu.ac.il/en/article/580815>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUcy7e36qF4>

⁶³ <https://pluralism.org/project-arab-jewish-dialogue-bar-islan-university>;
<https://biuinternational.com/news/jewish-arab-inter-religious-dialogue-part-2/>

⁶⁴ [Fighting the Academic Boycott: A New Initiative at Bar-Ilan University - BIU International School](#)

University puts the EUR in a position in which it may become indirectly connected to these violations, which would in turn seriously compromise the fundamental values and academic responsibilities of the EUR. This leads the committee to conclude that the EUR should take steps to exclude its own connection to these risks.

The committee advises the EUR Executive Board:

- not to engage in new partnerships or collaborations with Bar-Ilan University, and
- to suspend the existing exchange programme,
- until conversations with the Bar-Ilan University leadership and reassessment based on evidence provided by Bar-Ilan University lead to the conclusion that the risk of involvement in human rights violations as mentioned above has subsided, and
- to make sure that the validity of this advice and decision remains monitored annually.

2.3 Assessment The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Background information about Hebrew University of Jerusalem (hereafter “Hebrew University”)

“In pursuance of the Zionist aspiration of the Jewish people, Hebrew University was established in Jerusalem in 1925”⁶⁵, after a few decades of Jewish intellectuals around the world advocating the idea.⁶⁶ It is the oldest and most reputable university in Israel and is consistently ranked among the top 100 universities worldwide. Hebrew University is located on three campuses in Jerusalem. Its oldest campus is on Mount Scopus. This area became a UN protected Israeli exclave during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, was occupied by Israel in 1967, and later annexed. East Jerusalem, including Mount Scopus, is broadly considered to be part of occupied territory under international law. The other two campuses were developed between 1948 and 1967 when the Mount Scopus campus was practically unavailable.

Hebrew University has set as its goals the training of public, scientific, educational and professional leadership; the preservation of and research into Jewish, cultural, spiritual and intellectual traditions; and the expansion of the boundaries of knowledge for the benefit of all humanity.⁶⁷ According to its constitution, the University “shall be open to all persons without distinction of race, sex, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”.⁶⁸ Hebrew University has a strong profile on diversity, equity and inclusion. It offers, for example, free of charge pre-academic preparatory programmes for Arab students from East-Jerusalem, a Jewish-Arab leadership group, and an interfaith dialogue group. Of its 24,000 students, 16% is Arab, about half of them Palestinians from East Jerusalem. Hebrew University has a clear academic profile furthering human rights and fundamental values.⁶⁹

As a public university, Hebrew University is financed by the government with additional income from large research subsidies from the European Union, donations from Jewish communities and alumni worldwide, and revenues from patents and licensing.

Hebrew University is led by the president who reports to the Board of Governors and the rector who reports to the Senate. The Executive Committee of the Board of Governors consists of 40 members, including the president and rector, 11 full professors elected by the Senate and 26 members of the Board of Governors. The Executive Committee should count at least 12 residents of Israel and at least 12 overseas residents.

Collaborations of EUR with Hebrew University

The following collaborations between EUR and Hebrew University exist:

⁶⁵ <https://en.huji.ac.il/sites/default/files/en.new.huji/files/lhdps - the constitution 2022.pdf>

⁶⁶ <https://en.huji.ac.il/history>

⁶⁷ <https://en.huji.ac.il/history>

⁶⁸ <https://en.huji.ac.il/sites/default/files/en.new.huji/files/lhdps - the constitution 2022.pdf>

⁶⁹ [Hebrew University of Jerusalem \(Affiliation\) – 475 – Web of Science Core Collection](#) and [Hebrew University of Jerusalem \(Affiliation\) – 831 – Web of Science Core Collection](#)

- The Erasmus School of Law has an Erasmus+ exchange program with Hebrew University. In the academic year 2024-2025 there were three incoming exchange students from Hebrew University.
- The Erasmus Medical Centre is involved in the Horizon-funded research consortium iPROLEPSIS that includes Hebrew University as one of the partners. Hebrew University and Erasmus Medical Centre do not work together within one work package.

Assessment of the connection between Hebrew University and the identified risks

Based on the risks identified in the context assessment of Israel / Palestine and the scan of available information about Hebrew University in light of the topics in the assessment model (focusing on the recent past and especially the current situation post Oct 7, 2023), the following observations can be made regarding how Hebrew University acts in relation to freedom of expression, discrimination and inclusion, the right to self-determination, and systematic entanglement of the university with the State of Israel and the IDF. In addition, the committee has considered the efforts of Hebrew University in overcoming polarization (science diplomacy). The observations are not meant to be exhaustive but deemed to be credible ground for the assessment of structural risks of involvement in human rights violations.

1. Freedom of Expression

In 2020, discussion arose when Hebrew University gave out academic credits to students who volunteered for the right-wing group Im-Tirzu, which is known to blacklist academics, target left-wing groups within Israel and Palestinian perspectives, and actively support IDF.⁷⁰ Then rector Barak Medina argues that while the university generally disagrees with the politics that Im-Tirzu engages with, HUJI decided that the activities that Im-Tirzu was proposing were acceptable as they were separate from the movement's activities that provoke "the strong reservations of the university administration".⁷¹

In 2022, two students at Hebrew University were arrested and suspended from campus for six days after singing a traditional Palestinian folksong. The students were arrested by off-duty Israeli police officers who are students at Hebrew University who thought they were singing Jihadi/Nationalist songs. Campus security was not directly involved but also did not stop the arrests from happening. A faculty member from the Law School, Daphna Golan, commented on the situation, stating that "The University should have stood behind its students and not allowed the police to enter the campus, as is customary all over the world."⁷²

⁷⁰ <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2020-02-13/ty-article/.premium/hebrew-university-to-give-students-credit-for-volunteering-with-right-wing-group/0000017f-db26-d856-a37f-ffe6776c0000>; <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/hebrew-u-to-grant-students-credits-for-controversial-im-tirzu-activism-617473>. see for Im Tirtzu <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-canary-mission-new-website-fingers-anti-zionist-academics/>

⁷¹ <https://www.cfhu.org/news/hu-rector-barak-medina-defends-university-in-im-tirtzu-controversy/>

⁷² <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2022-03-28-hebrew-university-of-jerusalem/>; <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20220331-palestinian-students-detained-suspended-from-hebrew-university-for-singing-traditional-folk->

In March 2024, Arab-Israeli professor Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian was temporarily suspended for her public statements accusing Israel of genocide in Gaza and expressing She was reinstated after a substantial group of Hebrew University staff members challenged the suspension as a restriction of academic freedom and after a conversation with the rector.⁷³ In April 2024 she was arrested for incitement, to which the University protested, defending her freedom of speech. In August 2024 she retired from Hebrew University without publicly providing reasons.⁷⁴

The Hebrew University Senate released a statement regarding the ongoing war on June 5, 2024, regarding freedom of expression and academic freedom: "The protection of freedom of expression and academic freedom is especially essential in times of war. An open and critical discussion of government policy is a necessary element in a civilized society. The Hebrew University management and the Senate are committed to protecting the freedom of expression of all members of the university community. The management and the senate join VERA (Association of University Heads) in strongly condemning inciting campaigns against faculty members. We oppose legislative initiatives to limit freedom of expression in universities, in particular the dangerous and undemocratic bill of the Chairman of the Coalition initiated by the National Student Union, and call for its removal from the agenda."⁷⁵ This particular bill was proposed by the National Union of Israeli Students and stated: "Academic institutions will be obliged to immediately fire a lecturer, a teacher or researcher who expresses or acts in a manner that includes denial of the existence of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, incitement to racism, violence or terrorism and/or support for an armed struggle or an act of terrorism against Israel."⁷⁶

Student protests against the Gaza war as well as counterprotests have taken place at Hebrew University although in some instances they were canceled by the University for security reasons.⁷⁷

The committee considers that these circumstances do not constitute an indication of structural infringements on the freedom of expression by Hebrew University even though there may be concerns about Hebrew University's safeguarding of the freedom of expression of its students and staff.

[songs/; https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2022-03-30/ty-article/.premium/jerusalem-police-detain-palestinian-students-for-nationalist-song-on-campus/00000180-5b99-d97e-a7fb-7bdfa5c70000](https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2022-03-30/ty-article/.premium/jerusalem-police-detain-palestinian-students-for-nationalist-song-on-campus/00000180-5b99-d97e-a7fb-7bdfa5c70000)

⁷³ <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-03-12/ty-article/.premium/hebrew-university-suspends-palestinian-scholar-who-denied-hamas-sexual-violence/0000018e-3350-d5ad-addf-7f5130b60000>; <https://www.972mag.com/hebrew-university-nadera-shalhoub-kevorkian/>; <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-03-13/ty-article/.premium/100-hebrew-university-faculty-protest-suspension-of-scholar-alleging-israeli-gaza-genocide/0000018e-3993-d3fc-adff-b9b383330000>

⁷⁴ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/controversial-hebrew-university-professor-nadera-shalhoub-kevorkian-retires/>

⁷⁵ <https://en.rector.huji.ac.il/news/declaration-hebrew-university-senate-050624>

⁷⁶ See also <https://mesana.org/advocacy/committee-on-academic-freedom/2024/06/27/letter-opposing-a-bill-proposed-by-national-union-of-israeli-students>

⁷⁷ <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-04-08/ty-article/.premium/hebrew-university-students-protest-gaza-war-despite-schools-attempt-to-cancel-rally/00000196-15d0-d23b-aff6-5fd05d8b0000>

2. *Discrimination / Inclusion*

Hebrew University states its commitment as follows:

- “Promoting an inclusive community in which diversity is valued, and every member feels they have a rightful place and are welcomed, respected, and supported.
- Developing and supporting programs and policies that help attract and retain students from historically underrepresented groups, as well as hiring and promoting faculty, administrators, and staff from those groups.
- Building structures that promote inclusiveness and equity for all members of the community, especially students and staff from marginalized groups.
- Eliminating intimidation, bullying and harassment, including unwanted physical contact, offensive jokes, personal insults, and offensive materials. Such unwanted actions will be treated as disciplinary offenses.”⁷⁸

According to the director of its center for multiculturalism, Hebrew University’s vision is to “meet the potential of Hebrew University as a meeting point, a place where students that come from East and West Jerusalem, come from completely different cultures, lives, religions.”⁷⁹ Despite these policies, many Palestinian students face barriers at the university, including language issues and feelings of isolation, alienation and being watched, although for some Palestinian students (mostly those from East Jerusalem), the university acts as a safe haven.⁸⁰

In 2024, a lecturer who attacked and kidnapped a Palestinian in the occupied territories was immediately suspended by the University because “the university is obligated to preserve an educational and research environment that is safe, dignified and free from any conduct that is incompatible with the values of our community.”⁸¹

The committee considers that these circumstances do not constitute an indication of structural discrimination by the Hebrew University.

3. *Right to Self-determination*

In the context of the continued occupation of Palestinian territory and the facilitation of illegal settlements by the Israeli state, the preservation of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people is a crucial dimension of human rights that should also be observed by universities.

The location of Hebrew University’s first campus on Mount Scopus is regularly disputed. The area has been bought in 1910 by the University, predating the creation of the State of Israel. This original area came under Israeli control after the end of the British mandate in 1948.. Two

⁷⁸ <https://en.huji.ac.il/diversity-university>

⁷⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQCRLWmxxL4> [YouTube video from the diversity unit at Hebrew University from November 2023]

⁸⁰ Halabi, R. (2016). Arab students in a Hebrew university – existing but unnoticed. *Intercultural Education*, 27(6), 560–576. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2016.1262131>; Halabi, R. Palestinian students in an Israeli-Hebrew University: obstacles and challenges. *High Educ* 86, 661–673 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00920-x>

⁸¹ <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20241203-israeli-university-lecturer-suspended-after-kidnap-and-assault-of-palestinian/>

additional lots, used for a sports center and student housing, were donated between 1938 and 1947. They are outside the University's 1948-1967 enclave. "The University has owned these lots since before 1948 and thus maintains continuous private property rights there, regardless of the area's sovereignty status, which is indeed contested. [...] The use of the University of these two lots for its student dormitory and sports center does not violate any International Law rule or norm. International law does not prohibit the use of private land for public purposes, and the University is not at fault for using its longstanding property rights in ways that are lawful and non-discriminatory. The dormitories and sports center serve all Hebrew University students, Jews and Palestinians alike. The University's use of the area is based on its private property rights, not on the powers of the Israeli government, and is legal pursuant to all applicable legal systems, both national and international."⁸²

According to the Israeli Human Rights organization B'Tselem, Israel expropriated some lands in 1968 to expand the Mount Scopus Campus as part of a much larger and systematic land grab in the neighboring area of the village of Issawiyah in the years since 1967.⁸³ In 2020, the Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association wrote to Hebrew University about inter alia the University's alleged role in the closure of the south entrance to the village, to which the University replied that they were not involved in any decision made by the police.⁸⁴ Altogether, the committee notes that the University may indeed have benefited historically from actions by the State of Israel and operates in a contested area where its direct involvement is sometimes disputed. It also notes efforts by the University to reach out to the surrounding Palestinian neighborhoods.

Archaeologists affiliated with Hebrew University are involved in excavations in Qumran. Qumran and its exploration are heavily politically contested issues. The first findings were made in Qumran at the eve of the British Mandate. Following the turmoil of the Mandate's demise, the subsequent war, and the Jordanian occupation of the West Bank, the fragments found at Qumran ended up purchased in various private collections (including those purchased by Hebrew University Professor Eleazar Sukenik), by the State of Israel, and the largest one purchased by the Jordanian government. In 1960, Jordan cancelled all existing export permits, claiming that the scrolls are part of the Jordanian heritage. In 1966, Jordan nationalized the Archeological Museum of Palestine where the fragments were stored. Following the Six-Day War of 1967 and the occupation of the West Bank, Israel took control over the Museum and transferred the scrolls. Yet, the ownership of the scrolls has become a nationalist issue for Palestinians, who claim ownership over the scrolls.⁸⁵ Political developments were favorable to

⁸² [*mt_scopus_lands - english.pdf; https://overseas.huji.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/CampusTourMtScopus.pdf](https://overseas.huji.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/CampusTourMtScopus.pdf)

⁸³ https://www.btselem.org/sites/default/files/publications/202005_this_is_jerusalem_violence_and_dispossession_in_al_esawiyah_eng.pdf ; See also Wiewel, Wim, and Perry, David C. 2008. *Global Universities and Urban Development: Case Studies and Analysis : Case Studies and Analysis*. Oxford: Taylor & Francis Group. Chapter 11, Haim Yacobi.

⁸⁴ <https://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/jq-articles/Op%20pression%20of%20Issawiyah%20Neighborhood-Correspondance%20between%20CAF%20%26%20HUJI.pdf>

⁸⁵ Duhaime, B., Labadie, C. (2021). Intersections and Cultural Exchange: Archaeology, Culture, International Law and the Legal Travels of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In: Cull, N.J., Hawes, M.K. (eds)

their argument – in 2011, following Palestine’s entry into UNESCO, the organization recognized the site as occupied territory.⁸⁶ In the current debate around Qumran, its location is used as an argument for Palestinian authority, while cultural-historical reasons are used to support Israeli authority over its findings. In recent years, the Qumran scrolls have been exhibited in various places around the world (including in Assen in 2013), and the governments in host nations have been historically reluctant to recognize the Palestinian claim to these fragments.

At present, Hebrew University Institute of Archeology is not conducting any research in Qumran, or in the West Bank in general.⁸⁷ To the best of our knowledge, the last Hebrew University-led explorations of the area took place in 2001.⁸⁸ However, a Hebrew University-affiliated researcher is currently involved in archaeological exploration of Hyrcania, a monastery which is located near the original Qumran, undisputably located within the West Bank; as well as in conducting salvage operations to prevent looting in Qumran. Licenses for these excavations were obtained from the Israeli occupation authorities (The *Civil Administration of Judea and Samaria*).⁸⁹ The Hyrcania area remains accessible to the Palestinian population, and remains a popular tourist destination exploited by Palestinian entrepreneurs.⁹⁰ Yet, in Qumran, Palestinian population has consistently complained of being effectively excluded from the economic development⁹¹, a by-product of the post-Oslo division of the access to various West Bank areas.

In response to a query by the committee, the University responded through its legal representative that these activities were conducted “according to all applicable laws, including international law and all relevant agreements” and that “no authorization from any Palestinian authorities or communities were required”. The committee takes the position that archeological digs on occupied land are problematic from the point of view of international law, unless they are executed with approval of the Palestinian authorities/communities and to the benefit of the Palestinian people. This could constitute a credible indication of an infringement of the right to self-determination. As the involvement of Hebrew University is only indirect through one affiliated researcher, the committee considers this a point of concern but not a structural infringement by Hebrew University on the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people.

Canada’s Public Diplomacy. Palgrave Macmillan Series in Global Public Diplomacy. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-62015-2_6

⁸⁶ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5707/>

⁸⁷ <https://archaeology.huji.ac.il/excavations>

⁸⁸ Magness, J. (2024, October 23). Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*. Retrieved 18 May. 2025, from <https://oxfordre-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/religion/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-1063>.

⁸⁹ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-the-qumran-cliffs-an-expedition-digs-up-new-dead-sea-scroll-caves/> See also: <https://hyperallergic.com/447909/an-illegal-archeological-dig-in-the-west-bank-raises-questions-about-the-museum-of-the-bible/>

⁹⁰ <https://phtrail.org/content/hike-trail/sea-level-community-to-khirbet-al-mird.html>

⁹¹ <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1649969>

4. Systematic entanglement

Hebrew University offers three educational programmes together with the IDF: Havatzalot, Tzameret and Talpiot.⁹² Havatzalot offers soldiers regional and linguistic expertise in Middle East studies. Talpiot⁹³ trains talented students in mathematics and physics to develop military technologies. Tzameret trains medical doctors for the army.

As the Hebrew University rector Tamir Sheafer states, “the Hebrew University operates several academic programs in cooperation with the IDF and Israel Police. These programs are purely academic. The soldiers and police officers (themselves a diverse cohort composed of Jews and Arabs) take regular degree courses along with other Jewish and Palestinian students in the humanities, social sciences, and exact sciences. These programs substantially contribute to the education of these soldiers and police officers, providing a strong basis in the protection of human rights, ethics, morality and the fundamental structures of liberal democracy.”⁹⁴

According to Arab Israeli students at the Hebrew University, “the university administration has not made a serious effort to consider why Arab students, as well as some Jewish students, are fearful when they see uniforms and weapons on campus. I think they don’t understand, they see soldiers as protectors and not a threat.”⁹⁵ Moreover, due to this Havatzalot program, security has been upped at the University, which has been experienced as a militarization of the campus by some students, especially the Palestinian ones. The program, which grants broad privileges to student-soldiers (including priority in dorms and certain classes, and the designation of areas on campus restricted to their use) has significantly increased the presence of uniformed soldiers in classrooms and in all public spaces in the university.” Additionally, though the university itself denies this, students, faculty and two NGO's have reported that students have been pressured to leave their dorms in order to make space for the housing of soldiers on campus while they attend the Havatzalot programme. Because more Palestinian students rely on dorms, they have been disproportionately affected by this measure.⁹⁶

The committee considers that under normal circumstances, collaboration with the army for the sole purposes of academic education is in itself not an infringement of human rights or the fundamental values of the university. The degree to which Hebrew University collaborates with the army may be higher than in the Netherlands, but the committee deems that understandable given the more central role the army plays in Israeli society because of the concerns for national security. This higher level of collaboration, however, raises the question whether Hebrew University is sufficiently able to retain its academic autonomy and the space for critical perspectives on the army and the Israeli State. In response to a query by the committee, the University through its legal representative clarified that the education provided by the colleges

⁹² <https://www.washingtonjewishweek.com/from-medicine-to-high-tech-how-the-hebrew-university-of-jerusalem-unique-partnership-with-israel-defense-forces-is-bettering-the-world/>; <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/secretive-talpiot-program-helps-idf-soldiers-stay-ahead-of-the-curve-449279>

⁹³ החוג על מידע

⁹⁴ <https://www.cfhu.org/news/why-it-is-morally-wrong-to-boycott-the-hebrew-university-of-jerusalem/>

⁹⁵ <https://www.972mag.com/palestinian-students-militarization-hebrew-university/>

⁹⁶ <https://www.972mag.com/palestinian-students-militarization-hebrew-university/>

does not contribute to the requirements of the degree awarded by the University. Beyond this, the committee could not ascertain the exact scope and content of the collaboration with the IDF. This may be specifically questionable for the Talpiot programme that is targeted at developing military technologies.

Given the fact that the prolonged and intense military actions in Gaza have met with severe international criticism because of strong indications that they are being executed in ways that amount to war crimes and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, extraordinary caution should be expected regarding continued collaboration with the IDF. The committee considers that, under the present circumstances, direct collaboration with the IDF and the strong visible military presence on campus constitutes a credible indication of Hebrew University's systematic entanglement with the State of Israel and the IDF and a risk to be in connection with violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. The committee could not ascertain the specifics of the collaboration and the extents of the risk of involvement for EUR.

5. Science Diplomacy

Hebrew University has a strong international orientation in research and teaching and therefore commitment to science diplomacy. The Hebrew University president and rector have consistently defended Israel's right to defend itself following the Hamas-led attacks of 7 October 2023, but also called for a ceasefire, critical assessment of Israel's politics, and argued against academic boycotts as these would undermine the position of universities and academics as critical voices in the Israeli context.

When Finance Minister Betzalel Smotrich announced in 2023 the freezing of £42 million for a five-year educational programme for Palestinians along with the freezing of £66 million for Arab Israeli municipalities which had been approved by the previous government, Hebrew University's Director of diversity and strategy Mona Kassabri described this as "discrimination against Palestinian students. I can't see any other explanation. None of his arguments are true." The programme, Kassabri said, also helps build a bridge between Israelis and Palestinians, who otherwise don't engage with each other. "We have a lot of projects between Jewish and Palestinians. The goal is not to make them forget their identity, but that they will be open to seeing that they are different than how they have perceived each other their whole lives. It's an opportunity to discuss hard things, openly and politely."⁹⁷

Conclusion and Advice

The committee has noted Hebrew University's consistent commitment to and efforts supporting diversity, inclusion and dialogue. It has noted several incidents regarding the freedom of expression in which Hebrew University seeks to protect academic freedom and freedom of expression, at times balancing that with security arguments that could cause temporary restrictions. The committee acknowledges that both the current context and the impact of

⁹⁷ <https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/hebrew-university-freezing-of-funds-for-palestinian-students-is-discrimination/>

operating in a contested location can require the University to such balancing acts and sees no credible indications of structural serious risks of involvement in human rights violations in these dimensions.

The committee has noted discussions about the location of the Mount Scopus campus and the impact on surrounding neighborhoods and acknowledges the historically sensitive character of that location, and it considers that Hebrew University's benefiting from the occupation through the acquisition of land in Occupied Palestinian Territory since 1968 constitutes a credible indication of structural risks of involvement in human rights violations. As this is not easily changed, the committee considers that reconciliatory programmes to remedy this wrongdoing would be crucial as a mitigating factor.

The committee has found potential indications of violations of the right to self-determination of Palestine, notably by one of Hebrew University's affiliate researcher's engagement in excavation activities in Occupied Territory. The committee considers this a point of concern but not amounting to a credible indication of structural infringement of the right to self-determination. The committee has found that there is a credible indication of Hebrew University's systematic entanglement with the State of Israel and the IDF in the educational context of the military programmes, as well as negative perceptions of these programmes among specifically Palestinian / Arab students. In the context of serious allegations that military actions of the IDF amount to violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and/or war crimes, the committee considers that extraordinary caution is to be expected of Hebrew University regarding continued collaboration with the IDF. The committee considers that, under the present circumstances, direct collaboration with the IDF and the strong visible military presence on campus constitutes a credible indication of Hebrew University's systematic entanglement with the State of Israel and the IDF and a risk to be in connection with violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. The committee could not ascertain the specifics of the collaboration and the extents of the risk of involvement for EUR.

Overall, The committee considers that there are credible indications of Hebrew University's involvement in structural violations of human rights and/or international humanitarian law (including war crimes), directly with respect to its physical presence in Occupied Palestinian Territory (especially on land acquired since the Occupation in 1967) and indirectly with respect to its structural entanglement with the State of Israel and the IDF through its military programmes. Under these circumstances, collaboration with Hebrew University puts the EUR in a position in which it may become indirectly connected to these violations, which would in turn seriously compromise the fundamental values and academic responsibilities of the EUR. This leads the committee to conclude that the EUR should take steps to reduce its own connection to these risks until Hebrew University can show that it has taken adequate measures to ensure that:

- its physical presence on Occupied Palestinian Territory is accompanied by remedial and/or reconciliatory programmes , and

- its cooperation with the IDF and the military presence on campus no longer exposes Hebrew University to potential involvement in violations of human rights and/or international humanitarian law (including war crimes).

The committee advises the EUR Executive Board

- to engage within three months in conversation with Hebrew University based on their stated shared adherence to fundamental human rights and international humanitarian law, about remedial and/or reconciliatory actions in relation to the use of expropriated lands on Occupied Palestinian Territory, and the steps it takes to prevent involvement in violations of human rights and/or humanitarian law (including war crimes) through its collaboration with IDF and/or the military presence on campus,
- not to engage in new research collaborations or exchange programmes with Hebrew University,
- to minimize collaborations in existing research consortia or exchange programmes as mentioned in this assessment, insofar as the collaboration agreements allow for this,
- until the conversations with Hebrew University and a reassessment based on information provided by Hebrew University lead to the conclusion that the risk of involvement in human rights violations as mentioned above has subsided and/or that Hebrew University is taking adequate measures to minimize this risk,
- or, conversely, if Hebrew University is not taking adequate measures to uphold its academic responsibility in the current context of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, to suspend the existing collaborations, and
- make sure that the validity of this advice and decision remains monitored annually.

Advice on project level

The committee notes that the existing collaboration projects between EUR and Hebrew University do not specifically exacerbate the aforementioned risks for the EUR to become indirectly connected to human rights violations.

The Committee's advice to the EUR Executive Board to freeze collaboration in existing projects means that the EUR faculties involved are advised:

- to engage in conversations with their counterparts at Hebrew University to explain the EUR position, and
- to minimize all collaboration activities with Hebrew University insofar as the collaboration agreements allow for this, and
- to suspend all institutionalized exchanges of staff and students,
- while still accepting incoming visitors on an individual basis, taking note that scholars who are in a position of central or faculty leadership are considered institutional by definition.

2.4 Assessment University of Haifa

Background information about the University of Haifa

The University of Haifa (founded in 1963 under the auspices of Hebrew University, full accreditation in 1972) is one of the major universities in Israel. It caters to students in the north of Israel, where the population of the Northern District consists for 53 % of Arabs and 42 % Jews and the Haifa District of 25 % Arabs and 70 % Jews. The city of Haifa is known for its ethnic (and religious) diversity.⁹⁸

The University's main campus is located on the slope of Mount Carmel on the southside of Haifa in an area that was depopulated in 1948 in the Battle of Haifa. The location can be seen as symbolic of the history of the "Judaization of Galilee"⁹⁹, a broad set of policies aimed at strengthening the Jewish presence in northern Israel as part of nation-building processes.

The University of Haifa presents itself as "the largest research university in northern Israel, and the most pluralistic institution of higher education in the country."¹⁰⁰ "The University's distinctive mission is to foster academic excellence in an atmosphere of tolerance and multiculturalism. Our faculty and student population is unique in its composition. Here, Jews, Arabs, Druze, Haredi and secular students, new immigrants and military and security personnel come together to study, teach and learn."¹⁰¹ The Constitution Document of the University highlights the principles of Academic Freedom and non-discrimination, and states as the aim to "assist in shaping the spiritual and social image of the State of Israel" as well as "foster mutual understanding between Jews and non-Jews in the State of Israel."¹⁰² This self-stated identity of the university is reflected consistently in the University's newsletter and digital outlets after the Hamas attacks of 7 October 2023, explicitly expressing loyalty to the nation and the army whilst also embracing the diversity of the student and staff bodies.¹⁰³

The University of Haifa is a broad university with social sciences and humanities, natural sciences, and medical sciences. It counts approximately 18,000 students, including 1200 international students from 90 countries.¹⁰⁴ The University of Haifa website mentions a total of 500 global agreements with universities worldwide.¹⁰⁵

The University of Haifa is a public university, funded in majority by the Israeli government. The University is governed by a Board of Governors of no more than 200 members, partly from

⁹⁸ See for a description of the development of the cultural diversity in Haifa Karkabi, N. (2018). How and Why Haifa Has Become the "Palestinian Cultural Capital" in Israel. *City & Community*, 17(4), 1168-1188. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1111/cico.12341>

⁹⁹ See Falah, G. (1989). Israeli 'Judaization' policy in Galilee and its impact on local Arab urbanization. *Political geography quarterly* 8(3), 229-253; and for a nuanced critique Yiftachel, O., & Rumley, D. (1991). On the impact of Israel's Judaization policy in the Galilee. *Political Geography Quarterly* 10(3), 286-296.

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.haifa.ac.il/about-the-university/?lang=en>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.haifa.ac.il/about-the-university/?lang=en>

¹⁰² <https://www.haifa.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Constitution-December-2024.pdf>

¹⁰³ <https://glance.haifa.ac.il/>

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.haifa.ac.il/about-the-university/?lang=en>

¹⁰⁵ <https://uhaifa.org/global-partnership/>

within the university, but a majority should be from outside. The Board of Governors appoints an Executive Committee that decides about policy, strategy and structure. The Senate, consisting of academic staff, ex officio office holders, and student representatives, is the supreme academic authority. The President and Rector report to the Executive Committee (and the Rector also to the Senate).

Collaborations of EUR with the University of Haifa

- Erasmus School of Law: EMLE.¹⁰⁶ This interuniversity agreement regards the study programme 'European Master in Law and Economics' (EMLE), offered by a consortium that includes the University of Haifa and EUR, and is funded through Erasmus+. The Programme is divided into three terms of 20 ECTS each, which students can spend at two or three different universities of the Consortium. The University of Haifa offers courses in the first term, EUR in the first and second. In October 2024 an addendum was affixed to the consortium agreement, stating that the current safety situation in Israel does not allow to safely allocate students to Haifa. For that reason, Haifa courses were moved to the third term hoping that by the start of the term (i.e., April 2026) the situation in the country will be stabilized. This measure is described by the EMLE Board as a response to an emergency situation and will be re-evaluated on a yearly basis. As soon as the circumstances allow it, Haifa will return to being a first-term university.¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile the consortium has been joined by the University of Arizona, which is prohibited to collaborate with institutions that are boycotting Israeli institutions.¹⁰⁸
- Erasmus Medical Center: STAGE (Stay Healthy Through Ageing).¹⁰⁹ This Research project (2024-2029), funded by Horizon Europe, focuses on healthy ageing. The consortium counts 22 universities and other partners, including the EUR and the University of Haifa. The project aims to understand ageing from the intersecting dimension of biology, living environments and social stressors.¹¹⁰ The EUR and the University of Haifa are not collaborating directly in the same work package.

Assessment of the connection between the University of Haifa and the identified risks

Based on the risks identified in the context assessment of Israel / Palestine and the scan of available information about the University of Haifa in light of the topics in the assessment model (focusing on the recent past and especially the current situation post Oct 7, 2023), the following observations can be made regarding how the University of Haifa acts in relation to the freedom of expression, discrimination, the right to self-determination, and systematic entanglement of the university with the State of Israel and the IDF. In addition, the committee has considered the efforts of the University of Haifa in overcoming polarization (science diplomacy). The

¹⁰⁶ <https://emle.org/>

¹⁰⁷ EMLE Consortium Agreement (September 2022) and Addendum (October 2024)

¹⁰⁸ See the following links: <https://news.azpm.org/p/news-splash/2024/5/6/220177-arizona-law-bars-universities-from-boycotting-israel/>, <https://www.azleg.gov/arsDetail/?title=35>, See also the broader Anti-Boycott Act of 2018 and its implementation:

<https://www.bis.doc.gov/index.php/enforcement/oac>

¹⁰⁹ <https://stage-healthyageing.eu/> Horizon ID 101137146

¹¹⁰ <https://www.oulu.fi/en/projects/stage-stay-healthy-through-ageing>

observations are not meant to be exhaustive but are aimed at establishing whether there is credible ground to assume that risks exist of involvement by the University of Haifa in structural human rights violations or violations of academic values.

1. *Freedom of expression*

After the Hamas attacks and the subsequent war, disciplinary measures (suspension and/or notice of eviction from student housing) were taken against students who expressed themselves in pro-Palestinian sentiments over the war, either on social media or in a private context, which disproportionately seemed to affect Arab students. These measures were taken without prior notice or due process.¹¹¹ After having these decisions overturned and the students returned to the university, the university agreed to mediation.¹¹² University of Haifa professors (including Arab professors) who wrote a letter critiquing the University of Haifa's decision to suspend these students were publicly criticized by the rector for supporting students who support terrorism¹¹³ and one of the signatories, Vice-Rector Meir Hemmo, was publicly asked to resign from his position, which did not happen.¹¹⁴

The committee considers that these events, which happened in the direct aftermath of the Hamas attacks of 7 October 2023, do not constitute an indication of structural infringement by Haifa University of the freedom of expression, even though they may raise concerns about the University of Haifa's safeguarding of the freedom of expression of its students and staff.

2. *Discrimination / inclusion*

The University of Haifa is one of the most diverse Israeli universities in terms of ethnicity with more than 40% Arab students.¹¹⁵ The university presents itself as focused on diversity as "the most pluralistic institution of higher education in the country"¹¹⁶ and its attention for Arab-Jewish relations¹¹⁷ located as it is in one of the most diverse cities in Israel. The university was among the first to promote Arabs to the rank of professor and, in April 2024, elected an Arab

¹¹¹ <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2023-10-10-university-of-haifa/>

¹¹² <https://www.npr.org/2024/01/30/1226618464/israel-universities-gaza-war-arab-students>; <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2023-10-10-university-of-haifa/>; <https://www.jns.org/haifa-u-betrayed-hostages-says-student-union-chairman/>; <https://www.timesofisrael.com/university-of-haifa-suspends-8-arab-students-for-alleged-praise-of-oct-7-massacre/>; <https://www.ipost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-783426>.

¹¹³ <https://www.972mag.com/israeli-academia-crackdown-palestinian-students/>; <https://www.npr.org/2024/01/30/1226618464/israel-universities-gaza-war-arab-students>; <https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/10903>

¹¹⁴ 103 <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10160728693461201&set=a.10151455527846201>
NOTE : Translation from Hebrew to English by Facebook built-in translation tool and by ChatGPT. The letter is posted by a Facebook account named David Gurevich and shared by the Facebook account of the Ambassador's Online Programme. Gurevich was founder and coordinator of the Ambassador's Online Programme and Prof of Archeology at the University of Haifa.

¹¹⁵ <https://www.haaretz.com/haaretz-labels/power/2023-04-19/ty-article-labels/.premium/shared-society-is-blossoming-in-haifa/00000187-9a8f-d50b-a78f-ff9ff7580000> Other sources mention a percentage of 32 or 45.

¹¹⁶ <https://www.haifa.ac.il/about-the-university/?lang=en>

¹¹⁷ See the Constitution Document of the University, highlighting the principles of Academic Freedom and non-discrimination, and the aim to "assist in shaping the spiritual and social image of the State of Israel" as well as "foster mutual understanding between Jews and non-Jews in the State of Israel".
<https://www.haifa.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Constitution-December-2024.pdf>

female neuroscientist as rector of the University, another first.¹¹⁸ Supporters hail the university's commitment to diversity and inclusion and potential to build bridges between communities, exemplified in how the university fosters relationships between Arab and Jewish students, how Arab women hold senior positions in the university, and how the university visits local Arab communities to talk to high school students about their options to pursue university education.

The university boasts an "Arab-Jewish Community Leadership Program" and there is a focus on increasing social mobility for a variety of backgrounds.¹¹⁹ Presidents and rectors consistently speak out for the importance of diversity and tolerance, and the safety of all students and staff. This is not without complications in a context where structural difficulties of commuting exist for minorities, including for example Druze women who, despite having formal access to academic education at the University, have difficulty navigating long expensive bus trips with limited schedules.¹²⁰

Despite the positive signs of diversity and inclusion policies, the committee also observed various signs of exclusion. These are:

- A 2024 court case (unresolved to date) regarding a University of Haifa scholarship program focused on Jewish religion, history and heritage that de facto excludes Arab and Muslim students because their non-Hebrew school system often does not include such education.¹²¹
- Limitations occurring in 2024 to self-organizing student union elections affecting Arab students, on which the university did not act, based on the reasoning that it had no mandate to do so.¹²² As the university could have exerted its influence on student organizations to ensure fair elections, this constitutes at least a potential failure to prevent discrimination by third parties that are linked to the university.
- The continued use of the Psychometric Entrance Test¹²³ (common in Israeli universities and also part of admission procedures at the University of Haifa), which has been proven to be biased toward socioeconomic majorities and thus disadvantages Arab students.¹²⁴ As part of its streamlining of admission

¹¹⁸ <https://haifa-univ.org.uk/new-appointment-prof-mouna-maroun-university-of-haifa-appoints-israels-first-arab-rector/>

¹¹⁹ Diversity and social mobility at University of Haifa - opinion - The Jerusalem Post <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-712445>

¹²⁰ Orna Blumen and Shay Tzafir, 2011, Sentenced to Commute: Indigenous Young Women at a City University, *Cultural Analysis 10*: pp. 67-89. Both researchers are from the Uni of Haifa.

¹²¹ <https://www.english.acri.org.il/post/discrimination-in-scholarship-eligibility-for-arab-students-at-the-university-of-haifa>

¹²² <https://www.endangeredscholarsworldwide.net/post/participation-of-palestinian-student-groups-in-student-union-elections-prevented-at-haifa-university;> [https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20240917-israel-court-considers-preventing-palestinian-students-from-running-in-haifa-university-elections/;](https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20240917-israel-court-considers-preventing-palestinian-students-from-running-in-haifa-university-elections/) [https://www.972mag.com/haifa-university-student-union-election-corruption/.](https://www.972mag.com/haifa-university-student-union-election-corruption/)

¹²³ SUPPLEMENT - אוניברסיטת חיפה (general admission requirements Uni of Haifa 2023-2024)

¹²⁴ Majid Al-Haj (2024) *Education among Indigenous Palestinians in Israel: Inequality, Cultural Hegemony, and Social Change*. State University of New York Press.

procedure for IDF reserve soldiers, security personnel and civilians, this psychometric testing requirement was lifted.¹²⁵

The committee considers that these signs by themselves or even taken together do not constitute an indication of structural discrimination, although they raise the question how the University of Haifa is safeguarding equal rights, given the fact that it operates in a context of structural inequalities.

3. *The right to self-determination*

In the context of the continued occupation of Palestinian territory and the facilitation of illegal settlements by the Israeli state, the preservation of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people is a crucial dimension of human rights that should also be observed by universities.

On 1 November 2023, the then president of the University of Haifa, Ron Robin, together with other Israeli university presidents published a letter addressed at international academia in which they speak out unequivocally against Hamas but also acknowledge the “legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for statehood.”¹²⁶ At the same time, the chair of the Executive Committee of the Board of Governors, Dov Weissglas, has a track record of supporting illegal settlements as the former chief of staff of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.¹²⁷

The University, more specifically its Zinman Institute of Archeology, is actively involved in excavations in Occupied Palestinian Territory in Jordan Valley, focused on remains from the Hasmonean period in Jewish history.¹²⁸ In response to a query by the committee, the University through its legal representative responded that these activities were conducted “according to all applicable laws, including international law and all relevant agreements” and that “no authorization from any Palestinian authorities or communities were required”. The committee takes the position that archeological digs on occupied land are problematic from the point of view of international law, unless they are executed with approval of the Palestinian authorities/communities and to the benefit of the Palestinian people. Unless proven otherwise, this would constitute a credible indication of a (potentially structural) infringement of the right to self-determination.

¹²⁵ https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/university-of-haifa-announces-eased-admissions-and-scholarships-for-idf-reservists/

¹²⁶ <https://pr.haifa.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/To-our-Colleagues-Israeli-Uni.-Presidents-final.pdf>

¹²⁷ <https://www.ipost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/former-chief-of-staff-ariel-sharon-designed-gaza-disengagement-to-save-west-bank-settlements-412213>.

¹²⁸ <https://www.haifa.ac.il/2024/12/30/נדיר-מטמון-חשפו-חיפה-אוניברסיטת-חוקרי/> "The coins were discovered in what is thought to have been a roadside station, on what was then a main road along Nahal Tirzah that ascended to the Alexandrion Fortress, also known as Sarbata, north of Jericho in what is now the West Bank." <https://www.timesofisrael.com/miracle-hoard-of-hasmonean-coins-discovered-during-hanukkah-in-jordan-valley-dig/>

4. Systematic entanglement

Like other universities in Israel, the University of Haifa has a history of cooperating with the IDF. In the mid-1980s, researchers from Haifa were instrumental in “academizing” the Israeli military education, as a response to the perceived failures of the Israeli military during earlier wars. It was Haifa professor Arnon Sofer’s vision that military education should educate senior officers into officials who can serve in broad walks of public life which has over time permeated Israeli military education.¹²⁹

In 2018, the University placed a successful bid to host the so-called “Military Colleges Administration”¹³⁰, which includes all degree-awarding institutions in the IDF’s colleges.¹³¹ These include the Israeli National Defense College (INDC), the IDF War College, and the Tactical Command College (TCC). Next to their military studies, the students at the TCC work also towards a Bachelor’s degree, whereas students at INDC graduate from the University of Haifa with a Master’s degree.¹³² Although the breakdown of origin of students is not publicly available, a 2023 study based on earlier data indicated that about half of the students in the colleges are IDF officers, 15% belong to other security agencies, about 15-20% are civilians in government service, and the remainder is filled with international students.¹³³ The training which the attendees of the INDC receive includes ethical and legal aspects of national security, the evolution of war, and domestic and international challenges.¹³⁴ In TCC, the focus is on studying 80 individual battles, including recreating them.¹³⁵

Following the Hamas-led attacks on 7 October 2023, the University of Haifa newsletter and a special letter by the Board of Governors described donations of bullet proof vests, combat boots and medical equipment for the IDF, called for financial support for the student soldiers and their families, and announced living stipends, psychological support and temporary housing for displaced Israeli families.¹³⁶ In March 2024, the University announced streamlined admissions and scholarships for IDF reservists.¹³⁷

In its official newsletters since the Hamas attacks on 7th of October 2023, the University of Haifa consistently announces commemorations and shows support in words and actions for the IDF and for Israeli families and communities. In a personal essay, rector Mouna Maroun expresses horror and grief about the Hamas attacks on October 7th, linking her experiences of discrimination to the Hamas attacks. She also expresses her deep concern for the plight of children in Gaza, just as for Israeli children held captive. She explicitly blames Hamas for this.

¹²⁹ Ibid

¹³⁰ <https://pr.haifa.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Presidents-Report-2019-Master-20.5-with-new-photo.pdf>

<https://magazine.haifa.ac.il/index.php/winter-2018/113-university-of-haifa-to-lead-israel4>

¹³² <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/military-colleges/>

¹³³ Stern & Saltzman, 2023

¹³⁴ See Stern & Saltzman, 2023; see also <https://uhaifa.org/program/national-security-studies/>

¹³⁵ <https://besacenter.org/idf-tactical-command-college/>

¹³⁶ Special message by the Board of Governors: <https://trailer.web-view.net/Show/0X5F53CD874BE712B5E131AB83BED83419A0D25886AFF09C889B0071B5E888C581552835B8FF6C759D.htm>. Newsletter item <https://glance.haifa.ac.il/?na=view&id=135>

¹³⁷ https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/university-of-haifa-announces-eased-admissions-and-scholarships-for-idf-reservists/

She writes of having empathy for both sides of the conflict and ends her essay with a call for coexistence: “We must embrace and cherish our shared destiny by working with each other, engaging in meaningful dialogue, and understanding that when it comes to coexistence and shared life, there's nothing to fear.”¹³⁸

In an official statement by the University of Haifa Management dated 2024, speaking out against an academic boycott, the University states: “The University of Haifa believes everyone is bound by the law, including the International Humanitarian Law. It denounces any violation of such laws and calls on all parties to the current horrible armed conflict to comply with their legal obligations.”¹³⁹

The committee considers the University’s initiatives to support students within the University’s regular responsibilities. The bullet proof vests and medical equipment were donated through the Board of Governors and are described as “life-saving equipment”.¹⁴⁰ The donation of combat boots should be regarded as a student initiative.

The committee considers that under normal circumstances collaboration with the army for the sole purposes of academic education is in itself not an infringement of human rights or the fundamental values of the university. The degree to which the University of Haifa collaborates with the army may be higher than in the Netherlands, but the committee deems that understandable given the more central role the army plays in Israeli society because of the concerns for national security. This higher level of collaboration, however, raises the question whether the University of Haifa is sufficiently able to retain its academic autonomy and the space for critical perspectives on the army and the Israeli State. In response to a query by the committee, the University through its legal representative clarified that the education provided by the colleges does not contribute to the requirements of the degree awarded by the University. Beyond this, the committee could not ascertain the exact scope and content of the collaboration with the IDF.

Given the fact that the prolonged and intense military actions in Gaza have met with severe international criticism because of strong indications that they are being executed in ways that amount to war crimes and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, extraordinary caution should be expected regarding continued collaboration with the IDF. The committee considers that, under the present circumstances, direct collaboration with the IDF and the strong visible military presence on campus constitutes a credible indication of the University of Haifa's systematic entanglement with the State of Israel and the IDF and a risk to be in connection with violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. The committee could not ascertain the specifics of the collaboration and the extents of the risk of involvement for EUR.

¹³⁸ <https://www.newsweek.com/im-israeli-arab-hamas-does-not-represent-me-opinion-1845763>

¹³⁹ https://phils.uj.edu.pl/en_GB/aktualnosci/-/journal_content/56_INSTANCE_hSTt6vxZ0cH5/41606/156607536

¹⁴⁰ <https://glance.haifa.ac.il/?na=view&id=135>

5. Science diplomacy: building bridges

The issue of science diplomacy, the intentional effect of academic collaboration to build bridges between nations and communities, is considered relevant because it is one of the reasons why EUR in general wishes to maintain relationships with academic institutes and other societal partners and expects a similar attitude from its partners. If a partner contributes to segregation rather than cooperation, that contravenes that principle.

The University of Haifa has an ambitious international programme and exposes international students to “the many communities” in Israel. It mentions explicitly the Druze community, kibbutzim, and the Nova Festival as a way to understand the Hamas attacks. As part of the cultural heritage, Hanuka, Christmas, and Purim are mentioned. Ramadan and Eid-al-Fitr are mentioned in the calendar of the International Program.¹⁴¹ The University boasts a Jewish-Arab leadership programme bringing together students from both communities to learn about leadership and peace building.¹⁴²

The committee considers that the University of Haifa has a consistent international outlook with over 500 formal partnerships with universities worldwide¹⁴³ and openness and contributes to building cultural and religious bridges.

Conclusion and Advice

The committee has found substantial indications of an institutional dedication at the University of Haifa to human rights and diversity and inclusion in line with its pluralist identity and policies. It has also noted reports of violations of the freedom of speech and (indirect) discrimination against Arab students. These observations of discrimination and violation of the freedom of speech – while worrisome – do not amount to credible indications of University of Haifa's involvement in structural human rights violations or violations of academic values.

The committee has found potential indications of violations of the right to self-determination of Palestine, notably by the University of Haifa's engagement in excavation activities in Occupied Territory. If these activities are not undertaken in agreement and/or cooperation with local Palestinian authorities and to the benefit of the Palestinian population, this would constitute a credible indication of a (potentially structural) infringement of the right to self-determination.

The committee has found that there is a credible indication of the University of Haifa's systematic entanglement with the State of Israel and the IDF in the educational context of the military colleges. In the context of serious allegations that military actions of the IDF amount to violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and/or war crimes, the committee considers that extraordinary caution is to be expected of the University of Haifa regarding continued collaboration with the IDF, including serious efforts to prevent becoming

¹⁴¹ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/spotlight/uhaifa-international-master-your-mind-live-your-israel-experience/>; <https://uhaifa.org/academic-calendar/>

¹⁴² <https://www.haaretz.com/haaretz-labels/power/2023-04-19/ty-article-labels/.premium/shared-society-is-blossoming-in-haifa/00000187-9a8f-d50b-a78f-ff9ff7580000>

¹⁴³ <https://uhaifa.org/global-partnership/>

involved in those violations. Unless proven otherwise, the committee sees the collaboration of the University of Haifa with the IDF and the strong visible military presence on campus as a risk of becoming connected to human rights violations or violations of academic values.

Overall, the committee considers that there are credible indications of University of Haifa's involvement in structural violations of human rights and/or international humanitarian law (including war crimes), directly with respect to its excavation activities in Occupied Palestinian Territory and indirectly with respect to its structural entanglement with the State of Israel and the IDF through its military colleges. Under these circumstances, collaboration with the University of Haifa puts the EUR in a position in which it may become indirectly connected to these violations, which would in turn seriously compromise the fundamental values and academic responsibilities of the EUR.

This leads the committee to conclude that the EUR should take steps to reduce its own connection to these risks until the University of Haifa can show that it has taken adequate measures to ensure that:

- its excavation activities in Occupied Palestinian Territory comply with the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, and
- its cooperation with the IDF and the military presence on campus no longer exposes the University of Haifa to potential involvement in violations of human rights and/or international humanitarian law (including war crimes).

The committee therefore advises the EUR Executive Board:

- to engage within three months in conversations with the University of Haifa based on their stated shared adherence to fundamental human rights and international humanitarian law, about the steps it takes to prevent infringement of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people and to prevent involvement in violations of human rights and/or humanitarian law (including war crimes) through its collaboration with IDF and/or the military presence on campus,
- not to engage in new partnerships or collaborations with the University of Haifa, and
- to minimize collaboration in existing research consortia or exchange programmes as mentioned in this assessment insofar as the collaboration agreements allow for this,
- until the conversations with University of Haifa and a reassessment based on information provided by the University of Haifa lead to the conclusion that the risk of involvement in human rights violations as mentioned above have subsided, and/or that Hebrew University is taking adequate measures to minimize this risk,
- or, conversely, if the University of Haifa is not taking adequate measures to uphold its academic responsibility in the current context of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, to suspend the existing collaborations, and
- make sure that the validity of this advice and decision remains monitored annually.

Advice on project level

The committee notes that the two existing collaboration projects between EUR and the University of Haifa do not specifically exacerbate the aforementioned risks for the EUR to become indirectly connected to human rights violations.

The Committee's advice to the EUR Executive Board to minimize collaboration in existing projects means that the EUR faculties involved are advised:

- to engage in conversations with their counterparts at the University of Haifa to explain the EUR position, and
- to minimize all collaboration activities with the University of Haifa insofar as the collaboration agreements allow for this, and
- to suspend all institutionalized exchanges of staff and students,
- while still accepting incoming visitors on an individual basis, taking note that scholars who are in a position of central or faculty leadership are considered institutional by definition.