

EPFL and Israel

Report on the State of Collaboration

Prepared by the Global Ethics & Partnership (GEP) Committee, 25 June 2024

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AIM: To know in detail with whom EPFL collaborates in Israel. We look at institutions with whom we have structured relations (in research, education and innovation) and focus in particular on the compliance with the current policies of the Swiss government and we analyse possible direct contributions of EPFL researchers to Israel's military operations in the occupied Palestinian territories. Each identified collaboration is liable to receive a green, orange or red flag with regards to the potential proximity to Israel's military actions.

I. Introduction

Contextualisation

Israel has 64 higher education institutions (10 universities, 33 academic colleges, 21 teacher training colleges), all supervised by the Council for Higher Education. Only universities can award doctoral degrees. They are mostly funded through public funding. Israeli universities are highly reputed: Hebrew University, the Weizmann Institute, Tel Aviv University and the Technion rank among the top 1% of universities worldwide. Tuition fees are low. Israel's quality university education is often seen as the main reason for the country's high-tech boom and rapid economic development.

In the 2024 rankings, Israeli universities were not significantly affected despite the difficult conditions of operating during wartime. However, according to CWUR, Israel's global share in scientific research has fallen by 9% over the last five years, and there is concern that without additional government investment in research and development, Israel faces the possibility of declining in the future.

Israel has been associated with the EU's research and innovation framework programs since 1996. This long-standing partnership allows Israeli researchers, innovators, and research entities to participate in the EU's €95.5 billion Horizon Europe program on equal terms with entities from EU member states. Notably, Israel has been successful in areas such as ICT, health, advanced manufacturing, biotechnology, environment, and energy. Total funding for Israeli entities under FP7 (2007-2013 – €879 million), Horizon 2020 (2014-2020 – €1.28 billion) and Horizon Europe (2021-2027 – €503 million until 2023) adds up to over €2.6 billion. The participation of its military and security industry (e.g., [Elbit](#), [IAI](#) and [Rafael](#)) and its participation in the security-themed parts of these programmes has been criticised.

The Israeli war against Hamas is raising questions across academia (e.g., letter from the Flemish Interuniversity Council) asking whether they still comply with article 14 of the Horizon Europe grant agreement which stipulates that research projects *“must be carried out in line with the highest ethical standards and the applicable EU, international and national law on ethical principles”*. Project partners are expected to *“commit to and ensure the respect of basic EU values (such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of minorities)”*. The community is seeking guidance from the European Commission. Until now, the European Commission has not yet answered officially but already said that *“The EU is not considering suspending or revising the participation of Israeli entities in Horizon Europe, while ensuring strict adherence to international law and ethical standards”*. A few European institutions have already decided to suspend all agreements and institutional research projects involving an Israeli university (e.g., Free University of Brussels (ULB), University of Granada and the Spanish Rectors Conference CRUE¹). In response to CRUE's letter, the Association of University Heads of Israel (VERA)² argued that: 1) they stand for democracy, freedom of speech, and human rights in Israel, 2) Israeli Universities are independent institutions; 3) they are dedicated to

¹ [CRUE statement on the situation in the Gaza Strip - CRUE](#)

² [Association of University Heads, Israel \(VERA\) - Technion - Israel Institute of Technology](#)

bettering the lives of Palestinians and to promoting peace. Moreover, 4) they reiterate the danger of academic boycotts.

Israel is considered a partner country to the Erasmus+ program.

Disclaimers:

- In this analysis, we only examine ongoing projects between EPFL and Israeli organisations and the collaborations taking place under a signed contract and/or agreement.
- In this analysis, we do not consider co-publications between EPFL and Israeli organisations.
- This analysis only uses data, news and information from official, neutral and/or reliable sources. It focuses solely on the academic world in Israel.
- The wording used in this analysis is aimed at strictly reflecting facts, not opinions, and should be seen as neutral.

II. Overview of collaborations with Israeli organisations

1. Partner universities

		Type of collaboration		
		Institutional	Research + Innovation	Education
Universities	Israel Institute of Technology (TECHNION)	1	4	< 5 students in exchange < 5 visiting PhDs
	Bar Ilan University		3	
	Ben-Gurion University of the Negev		1	
	Tel Aviv University		2	
	The Hebrew University of Jerusalem		4	
	Weizmann Institute of Science		8	
Others	Tel Aviv Medical Center		1	
	Bloomfield Science Museum Jerusalem		1	
	Agricultural Research Organization – Volcani Center		1	

About 30% of all university students have been called up for reserve duty during the current crisis, along with thousands of university faculty and staff, according to the Association of University Heads³. All universities across Israel have been mobilised in the government's response to the October 7th 2023 events, and this is therefore the case for the universities with whom EPFL has cultivated relations over the years. Out of some 360,000 reservists

³ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-universities-step-up-to-support-students-in-reserves-war-effort/>

subsequently called up by the IDF, an estimated 100,000 were enrolled in one of Israel's major universities.⁴

Public statements serving as the official stance of universities with regards to the ongoing military operations of the Israeli forces in the Gaza strip can be challenging to find in English, on the universities' websites or reliable news outlets. Personal accounts on social media have not been explored in detail. Each university surveyed for this analysis has released news or statements of support to its students, faculty members and staff, alumni, Israeli citizens and communities affected by the events of October 7th and more broadly to the Israeli society.

No official positions on behalf of these institutions explicitly supporting the ongoing military operations and the related questions revolving around this engagement have been found.

Detailed data on the nationalities and origins of students in the surveyed universities was not found.

2. Institutional

2.1. Israel Institute of Technology (TECHNION)

- *Organisation, financing, origin of students*

The TECHNION was founded in 1912 and opened its doors to its first students in 1924.⁵ Since then, more than 120,000 students have graduated from Technion, and the institute's affiliated professors and researchers have received four Nobel prizes (2004, 2011 and 2013). The details on the origins of students are not available.

The Technion is composed of 18 faculties and 42 research institutes. It offers 50 undergraduate programmes and 81 graduate programmes. Approximately 13,000 students are currently enrolled within the university.⁶ In 2022-2023, the institute had 567 faculty members.

The Technion's operating budget for the 2022/2023 period was approximately CHF 390 million.⁷ The institute relies on public funding: 70,6% of its publicly declared operating budget is allocated by the Israeli government.⁸ It should be noted that research at the Technion is strongly supported by external parties (in 2022, USD 109.2 million have been invested in research through external sources). In addition, the Technion has developed a network of 16 so-called societies composed of "donors, alumni, and stakeholders investing in the Technion's critical research and technologies to transform the State of Israel and do good around the world".

The Technion has two international campuses outside Israel: 1) Jacobs Technion-Cornell Institute (JTIC) in the US, 2) Guangdong Technion Israel Institute of Technology (GTIIT) in China. Other international partnerships can be found on their website.⁹

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<https://www.timesofisrael.com/released-idf-reservists-head-back-to-school-but-not-everything-is-a-matter-of-course/>

⁵ <https://www.technion.ac.il/en/history-of-the-technion/>

⁶ <https://www.technion.ac.il/en/fast-facts/>

⁷ The budget is using an exchange rate of June 2024.

⁸ President's report 2023, <https://www.technion.ac.il/en/2023/06/presidents-report/>, page 77.

⁹ <https://int.technion.ac.il/international-partnerships/>

- *Changes and reactions of the institution since October 7th*

Approximately 3,500 students and academic and administrative staff from the Technion were called up for reserve duty.^{10,11}

We could not find any public statement from the Technion explicitly supporting the military operations in Gaza. The following list of official statements can offer a better understanding of the Technion's position:

- Statement from the President, 15 October 2023
- Letter of Deep Concern from University Heads in Israel to Colleagues Around the World, 1 November 2023
- Letter to Technion Family.01.pdf (mcusercontent.com), 21 November 2023
- Association of University Heads, Israel (VERA) – Statement on Violent Demonstrations and Antisemitism on US Campuses, 26 April 2024
- Response to the Governing Board of the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE), 21 May 2024
- Technion Community Grieves - Technion - Israel Institute of Technology, 19 June 2024

- *Relations with military and defence industry*

The Technion's history and strategy is deeply linked to the Israeli state, as illustrated in the institute's statement: "a science and technology research university, among the world's top ten, dedicated to the creation of knowledge and the development of human capital and leadership, for the advancement of the State of Israel and all humanity".¹² Founded before the official independence of Israel in 1948, the institute's national influence is manifold: an elite institution for excellence in academics, the "technological backbone of Israel" with an impact on Israel's economy and society but as well to support national security.

Therefore, the Technion has nurtured links with the Israeli military and defence industry over its existence. Alumni contributing to the national defence are numerous. The American Technion Society provided a glimpse of these interactions, quoting notably the contribution of the institute to the building and operation of the Iron Dome, the Arrow Anti-Missile systems, David's Sling and Iron Beam.¹³ These activities open the Technion to criticism from pro-Palestine collectives, as for example:

- TECHNION EXPOSED: Israel Technology institute's links with the IDF | by Academics in Solidarity with Palestine | Medium
- The Technion: an elite university for Israeli student-soldiers (newarab.com)

- *Exchange agreement and joint membership in networks*

Both Technion and EPFL are full members of the EuroTech Universities Alliance (along with Technische Universität München (TUM), Denmark's Tekniske Universitet (DTU), Technische Universiteit Eindhoven (TU/e) and Institut Polytechnique de Paris (IP-Paris). Legally, this Alliance is an "Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif" (AISBL) under Belgian law. The association's main objectives are to: 1. Support the continuing strengthening of collaboration

¹⁰ <https://www.technion.ac.il/en/2024/04/presidents-letter-to-the-technion-family/>

¹¹ <https://www.technion.ac.il/en/2023/11/the-technion-supports-reserve-soldiers/>

¹² <https://www.technion.ac.il/en/technion-vision/>

¹³ <https://ats.org/our-impact/the-technion-protecting-israel-for-100-years/>

across the EuroTech Universities in relation to research, education, innovation and entrepreneurship; 2. Support the Alliance's strategic positioning in Europe, its contribution to EU policies and its participation in EU funding programmes; 3. Build and disseminate the Alliance's strategic profile in Europe and in the international arena; 4. Promote the Alliance's interests in its relations and collaborations with key stakeholders. The association is administered by a Board of Directors (each member appoints one). All members of the association undertake to pay the membership fee of the current year. Its amount is fixed by the board of directors on an annual basis. The funding is for the office in Brussels and to allow some seed joint activities (e.g. organisation of joint Summer schools for PhD students, annual event in Brussels, etc...). Members' communities are encouraged to seek third party funding (e.g., from the EU) for major activities.

In 2009, EPFL and Technion signed an MoU to "expand scholarly ties, facilitate academic cooperation, increase educational opportunities, enrich the educational environment and promote international and inter-cultural understanding". Technically, this MoU renews automatically. In practice, the fact that Technion joined EuroTech and the fact that we signed a student exchange agreement (see below for more details) supersedes this MoU.

Both Technion and EPFL are also members of CESAER, an international association of 58 universities with a strong science and technology profile that advocate, learn from each other and inspire debates.

The student exchange agreement we signed with Technion in 2015 expired in 2020. Although this agreement has not been renewed, we have accepted some of their students in the last few years. We are currently hosting a few (less than five) of their Bachelor students and have agreed to welcome the same number for 24/25. We are also hosting less than 5 visiting PhD students (without having an agreement in place, as this is not required for this type of exchange).

- *Admission policy*

Technion has set up several policies and actions to attract more Palestinian and Arab students in the past years. An "Excellence for Arab Students at Technion (EAST)" scholarship has been launched. According to a 2020 report¹⁴ of the EAST programme, "the Technion has been able to increase numbers of Arabic-speaking students and Arab female students by 200% and 350% respectively since 2004. The number of Arab students deemed 'outstanding' has risen by 1,800%, and the number of Arab graduate students by 120%. Dropout rates among Arab students have fallen by 67%."¹⁵

2.2. Bar-Ilan University

- *Organisation, financing, origin of students*

Bar-Ilan University is one of the largest public research universities in Israel, with about 19,000 students and about 1,350 academic staff. It was founded in 1955.

Bar-Ilan's mission is to "blend Jewish tradition with modern technologies and scholarship and the university endeavours to teach the Jewish heritage to all its students while providing [an] academic education."

¹⁴ <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01327-3>

¹⁵ <https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/exellnce-arab-students-at-the-technion-east/reports/#menu>

In 2025 its annual budget is about \$130 million. While specific budget details are not readily available, it's worth noting that the Israeli government provides 60% of the university's budget.¹⁶

Bar-Ilan University recently received a \$260 million anonymous donation earmarked for science and technology development. This remarkable gift is the largest bequest ever to the university and one of the largest donations ever made to an Israeli university. The donor, a Jewish North American and graduate of Columbia University who served in World War II, chose Bar-Ilan as the research institution best suited to expand science-based technological resilience in Israel. The university plans to use the funds to recruit researchers, build research laboratories, and create partnerships to develop science-based solutions for Israel's challenges. The amount was received after the donor's death and is not likely to be linked to the current situation in Gaza.¹⁷

They describe their campus as "A microcosm of Israeli society, BIU's diverse student body includes both secular and religious, Jews and non-Jews, new immigrants, and international students and researchers. BIU's internationally recognized academic faculty and multifaceted administrative staff round off the BIU family." (From their webpage)

The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies (BESA) at Bar-Ilan University is a renowned research institution specialising in strategic and security studies. BESA conducts research on various topics related to national security, international relations, and military affairs.

- *Changes and reactions of the institution since October 7th*

Bar-Ilan University announced grants for the more than 6,000 registered students who served in the military.¹⁸ 2,500 of its students have been enrolled in the army as reservists after 7 October 2023.¹⁹

The social media posts of this university we could find were in support of the Israeli hostages.

In a recent publication of BESA²⁰, two of their academics write: "To continue its mission to defeat Hamas, Israel must take the initiative to replenish the stores of international legitimacy lost due to the acute humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. While the primary blame for the crisis lies with Hamas, which cares nothing for Gazan civilians, Israel is being held responsible even by the US for not doing enough to get aid in..."

In the section "War response" of BIU's annual rapport²¹, the university showcases examples of how "through interviews, editorials, and media citations, Bar-Ilan researchers helped inform and shape the discourse about Israel's war, both at home and in countries around the world".²²

¹⁶ Bar-Ilan University - WHED - IAU's World Higher Education Database

¹⁷ Bar-Ilan University receives \$260 million donation for tech investment | The Times of Israel

¹⁸ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-universities-step-up-to-support-students-in-reserves-war-effort/>

¹⁹

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/released-idf-reservists-head-back-to-school-but-not-everything-is-a-matter-of-course/>

²⁰ Beyond Humanitarian Aid: A Plan for Gazan Civilians Is a Strategic Necessity for Israel (besacenter.org)

²¹ War Response (biu.ac.il)

²² War Response (biu.ac.il)

- *Relations with military and defence industry*

No other relations than BESA (see above) were found.

- *Exchange agreement and joint membership in networks*

We do not have any.

- *Admission policy*

Bar-Ilan says it is “Proud to be one of Israel’s most diverse universities”, with “over 2,000 Israeli Arab students [out of 20’000] alongside secular, reform and orthodox Jewish students, including over 600 Haredi students.”²³

The university provides specific support for Arab students: “Students from Arab society study at Bar-Ilan university. To help these students integrate successfully into academic studies, steps have been taken to ease the acclimation process, such as contacting applicants in their native tongue, giving the Arab language and culture exposure in public space, updating, and developing new programs for students from Arab society and including their special days in the academic calendar. For several years a broad academic support framework has also been in place for addressing academic and social issues.”²⁴

2.3. Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

- *Organisation, financing, origin of students*

The Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU) is a multi-disciplinary research university, with more 19,000 students and 4,000 faculty members across 6 academic faculties and over 60 interdisciplinary research hubs.²⁵

Established in 1969 with the aim of promoting the development of the Negev desert, BGU had a budget of approximately USD 585 million for the 2023/2024 period.

- *Changes and reactions of the institution since October 7th*

BGU is affected by the loss of six students since 7 October 2023.²⁶ BGU community has provided support to the ones affected by the events of and following 7 October 2023.²⁷

As of February 2024, more than 2,000 students at BGU were called into the military.²⁸ Enrolled students at BGU called up for reserve duty have received a grant and a postponement of their rental fees if they were living in university dormitories, among other benefits.²⁹

²³ <https://www.bfbiu.org/>

²⁴ <https://dean.biu.ac.il/en/node/47>

²⁵ 2024 President’s report, <https://digitaler.cld.bz/BenGurion-University/BenGurion-presidents-report2024/44/#zoom=true>

²⁶ <https://digitaler.cld.bz/BenGurion-University/BenGurion-presidents-report2024/10/>

²⁷ <https://www.bgu.ac.il/en/news-and-articles/bgu-supports-the-south/>

²⁸ 2024 President’s report, <https://digitaler.cld.bz/BenGurion-University/BenGurion-presidents-report2024/22/>

²⁹ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-universities-step-up-to-support-students-in-reserves-war-effort/>

BGU “immediately opened its campus and dormitories to soldiers, doctors, and visiting family members at no cost... A variety of psychological services are also available to students, faculty and staff.”³⁰

- *Relations with military and defence industry*

BGU hosts the Homeland Security Institute, which gathers researchers and scientists from “diverse disciplines from engineering to psychology, medicine to geography with the goal of improving overall Security: the state of being free from danger or injury: To protect our social wellbeing, to protect our borders and infrastructures, and to protect our virtual environment.”³¹ It promotes partnerships with institutions “with similar interests” – yet a list of past and current partnerships is currently not available. The projects involving the institute’s teams include the following.³²

- LIGHT BLADE: this laser defence system eliminates airborne threats out of the sky at a range of up to two kilometres before they can enter Israeli territory.
- “HYDRO CAMEL”: The first of its kind, this 84-lb. mini autonomous submarine can plan missions, avoid obstacles, and make decisions without a human operator.
- MINI-COPTER DRONE: this top-grade unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) is able to carry up to 200 pounds of cargo, fly exceedingly low without being detected by the naked eye, and can be controlled from afar.
- AUTONOMOUS ROBOTS AND VEHICLES: these are designed to protect borders, navigate tunnels and climb walls while keeping soldiers out of harm’s way.
- SPEEDY SMART ARMORED TANK: which can travel manned or unmanned and has the ability to remain undetected.
- DRONE SNIPER: remotely controlled, shoots small arms fire from the air.
- SMART RIFLE: which discharges only after locking onto target.
- “SKY EYE” DRONE: which autonomously scans and documents a six-mile area.
- ATTACK-PROOF BUILDING MATERIALS: that withstand assault, including missile-proof glass.

It should be mentioned that all the above-mentioned innovations were publicised in 2022 and may have been ready to use for operations onwards. Also, a disclaimer from BGU stipulates that “many technologies and tools are presently being developed in collaboration with the Israeli and U.S. defence administrations under the strictest confidentiality.”³³

Given this situation, collaboration with the Homeland Security Institute needs to be carefully checked.

- *Exchange agreement and joint membership in networks*

We do not have any.

- *Admission policy*

BGU has specific support tools for students of Arab origin : “For several years BGU has been offering programs for advancement of higher education among Arab students. The purpose

³⁰ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-universities-step-up-to-support-students-in-reserves-war-effort/>

³¹ <https://in.bgu.ac.il/en/hsi/Pages/mission.aspx>

³² https://issuu.com/a4bgu/docs/2022_glazer_future_tech_building_flipbook

³³ https://issuu.com/a4bgu/docs/2022_glazer_future_tech_building_flipbook

of the programs is to help students cope with the many difficulties they encounter.”³⁴ BGU hosts about 600 students of Arab origin, mostly from the Bedouin community.

2.4. Tel Aviv University

- *Organisation, financing, origin of students*

Tel Aviv University (TAU) is Israel's largest and most diversified higher education institution, with 9 faculties and over 30,000 students (and more than 2,000 international students), 1,200 researchers and 125 schools and departments across sciences, humanities and arts.³⁵

TAU's budget consists of government funding and private donations.³⁶ TAU has more than 200,000 alumni. The university remains committed to further its internalisation process and is seeking to cultivate new academic partnerships abroad.³⁷

As part of its strategy, TAU established the Equality and Diversity Commission in 2021 to advance policy, programming and activities for enhancing equality and diversity among its academic faculty, administrative employees and students – including Israeli Arabs, women, first-generation university students, people with disabilities, Sephardic students, the LGBTQ community, Ethiopian Israelis, the ultra-Orthodox, and others.³⁸

- *Changes and reactions of the institution since October 7th*

TAU has the highest number of student reservists in Israel – amongst all the universities in Israel – and 34% of them are women. As of February 2024, 6,657 students from TAU were called up for reserve duty.³⁹ Over TAU 5,000 students who have been called up have received grants of USD 250 in October 2023.⁴⁰

TAU has published a study indicating that about half of the Arab population (47%) surveyed in Israel feel that Israel's response to the events of 7 October 2023 was justified (44% do not).

TAU organised field visits for international students to some of the sites where the events of 7 October unfolded.⁴¹ TAU also supports dialogues between international students and Israeli students who have been involved in the army as reservists to share their experience – and potentially support volunteerism efforts in the army.⁴²

- *Relations with military and defence industry*

Tel Aviv University launched a National PTSD Clinic for Civilians and Soldiers in December 2023.⁴³ The Clinic treats civilians and reserve soldiers suffering from PTSD as a result of the war or other causes, referred by the Ministry of Defence and the National Insurance Institute, as well as private citizens seeking treatment.

Tel Aviv University also hosts the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS).

³⁴ <https://in.bgu.ac.il/Dekanat/en/Pages/Student-Advancement.aspx>

³⁵ https://international.tau.ac.il/about_tau

³⁶ https://boq.tau.ac.il/committee_form_finance

³⁷ <https://international.tau.ac.il/NAFSA-2024>

³⁸ <https://english.tau.ac.il/strategy>

³⁹ <https://english.tau.ac.il/news/student-reservists-tau>

⁴⁰ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-universities-step-up-to-support-students-in-reserves-war-effort/>

⁴¹ <https://international.tau.ac.il/gaza-envelope-trip>

⁴² <https://international.tau.ac.il/lone-soldiers-panel>

⁴³ <https://english.tau.ac.il/news/national-ptsd-clinic>

No public statement from TAU explicitly supporting the military operations in Gaza could be found.

- *Exchange agreement and joint membership in networks*

We do not have any.

- *Admission policy*

Tel Aviv University puts a strong emphasis on the diversity of its community: “At TAU, Jewish students and faculty learn and work alongside their Arab counterparts; students from Israel’s central region come together with those from Israel’s outlying communities; ultra-Orthodox students study together with secular students in non-segregated classrooms; and immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia rub shoulders with Israeli-born Sabras.”⁴⁴ The share of Israeli Arab students rose from a former 8-9% to 16% in 2021.

2.5. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

- *Organisation, financing, origin of students*

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem is one of the top public universities in Israel. Co-founded by Albert Einstein and Chaim Weizmann in 1918, HUJI officially opened in 1925⁴⁵ – making it the second oldest academic institution in the country after the Technion. Eight Nobel Prizes have been awarded to scientists and academics associated with the HUJI.

The Budget of the university amounted to USD 693.6 million for the 2022/2023 period.

HUJI has more than 23,500 students enrolled in programmes and is the largest employer in Jerusalem (with around 6,000 Academic & administrative staff). It is one of the most international universities in the country, with more than 65 other countries represented among its community. According to its publicly available information, HUJI has signed “150 agreements for joint projects with other universities and 25 agreements for student exchanges with 14 countries.”⁴⁶

- *Changes and reactions of the institution since October 7th*

HUJI have committed to creating an inclusive campus by developing guidelines at the opening of the school year to “create a framework for expressing opinions and ideas, reminding students of their right to free speech and obligation to civic discourse and mutual respect.”⁴⁷ They also launched the “We Are One campaign”⁴⁸ to raise funds for “funds are helping students who serve stay on track with their studies, expanding access to mental health services, and creating opportunities for building a shared society between Jewish and Arab students on campus.”

In recent news, a professor of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, is currently under investigation for incitement to terrorism. Their arrest has sparked debate in the country about academic freedom and free speech. And “some other Israeli professors and students worry

⁴⁴ <https://www.aftau.org/diversity-at-tau/>

⁴⁵ <https://en.huji.ac.il/president-speech>

⁴⁶ <https://en.huji.ac.il/university-numbers>

⁴⁷

<https://www.storydoc.com/47495ff00abf235a33fca47f1ed40b8b/906ed943-9d3f-48aa-8c9a-120720ab5668/665665caff08eb1b6f4cfa51>

⁴⁸

<https://www.storydoc.com/47495ff00abf235a33fca47f1ed40b8b/c5a74c5f-0413-45bf-9ab6-50e00b18d209/654b1a9f0f39b9000c238a7f>

that the country's universities – which had long defended the values of relative diversity and open-mindedness – have contributed to the suppression of dissent.”⁴⁹ While some of their research, which has been peer-reviewed, faces controversies, no justification of their arrest was provided by the police according to the judge.^{50,51} Hebrew University called for the speedy release of its faculty members.

HUJI has allocated an emergency fund that would support its 4,000 students “serving in the reserves, residents of the Gaza envelope affected by a recent terrorist attack, and evacuees from the northern region.”⁵²

- *Relations with military and defence industry*

We could not find any.

- *Exchange agreement and joint membership in networks*

We do not have any.

- *Admission policy*

The Hebrew University asserts its “responsibility to help advance equal opportunities to the Arab society [... and] to help these students close linguistic, academic and social gaps”⁵³. The share of Arab students at HUJI rose from 7% in 2004 to 14% in 2019.

2.6. Weizmann Institute of Science

- *Organisation, financing, origin of students*

The Weizmann Institute of Science (WIS) is a multidisciplinary basic research institution in the natural and exact sciences, founded in 1934. It only offers postgraduate-only degrees. Six Nobel laureates and three Turing Award winners have been associated with the WIS. As of 2019, WIS had 750 PhD students, 500 MSc students and 450 Postdoctoral fellows.⁵⁴

The annual operating budget of the Weizmann Institute of Science was around CHF 360 million in 2018.⁵⁵ A third of this funding comes from the government of Israel. The rest of the Institute's income is generated through scientific discoveries, competitive grants, private philanthropy, and scientific services offered by Institute core facilities to academic and commercial partners. Scientific discoveries generate significant income from licensing agreements made through Yeda, the Institute's technology transfer arm.

⁴⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/12/world/australia/palestinian-professor-israel-gaza-war.html>

⁵⁰

<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-04-20/ty-article/.premium/israeli-court-orders-release-of-palestinian-academic-suspected-of-incitement-to-terror/0000018e-f760-d79f-a98e-f7e471360000>

⁵¹

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/apr/26/political-arrest-palestinian-academic-nadera-shalhoub-kevorkian-israel-civil-liberties-threat>

⁵² <https://en.huji.ac.il/news/enhanced-financial-package-our-students-serving-idf>

⁵³ <https://en.diversity.huji.ac.il/arabsociety>

⁵⁴ <https://www.weizmann.ac.il/pages/about-institute>

⁵⁵ <https://wis-wander.weizmann.ac.il/about/operating-budget>

- *Changes and reactions of the institution since October 7th*

WIS published an official statement in the aftermath of the 7 October events, entitled “Standing Together against Terror and Violence: A Call to the International Science Community”.⁵⁶

- *Relations with military and defence industry*

Public information on the Weizmann Institute’s activities with the military industry is scarce. It should be noted that many websites and outlets mention alleged close ties between WIS and Israel biggest arms manufacturers, including Elbit Systems.

In 2022, Elbit Systems granted a USD 16 million contract to supply a space telescope to the Weizmann Institute of Science.⁵⁷ The main purpose of this project is to support astronomical research, and does not constitute an example of defence collaboration.

- *Exchange agreement and joint membership in networks*

We do not have any.

- *Admission policy*

The Weizmann Institute claims its openness to diversity: “We seek and welcome students, staff, and faculty who are culturally, ethnically, racially, and in other ways diverse.”⁵⁸ It has launched support and mentorship programs dedicated to Arab students (“Together For Success”, “Ma’ale program in computer science”).

2.7. Tel Aviv Medical Center

- *Organisation, financing, origin of students*

NOTE: The Israeli partner on the project is not the Tel Aviv Medical Center itself, but the Foundation for Medical Research Infrastructural Development and Health Services next to the Medical Center Tel Aviv.

Tel Aviv Medical Center: Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center, commonly referred to as Ichilov Hospital, is the largest teaching and general hospital serving Tel Aviv, Israel, and its metropolitan area. It is also the second-largest hospital complex in the country.

The Foundation for Medical Research Infrastructural Development and Health Services, located next to the Tel Aviv Medical Center, focuses on advancing medical research and improving healthcare infrastructure. This organisation collaborates with various universities, research institutions, and non-profit groups to enhance research capabilities and healthcare services. The Mobilise-D initiative seems to be one of their most significant projects. It is funded through a combination of sources, primarily focusing on significant donations and grants. Notably, it has received substantial support from the Helmsley Charitable Trust, which

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<https://wis-wander.weizmann.ac.il/campus/standing-together-against-terror-and-violence-call-international-science-community>

⁵⁷

<https://elbitsystems.com/pr-new/elbit-systems-awarded-a-16-million-contract-to-supply-a-space-telescope-to-the-weizmann-institute-of-science/>

⁵⁸ <https://www.weizmann.ac.il/sites/Diversity/>

has granted over \$1.5 million for specific projects such as understanding the pathogenesis of Crohn's Disease (Helmsley Charitable Trust).

- *Changes and reactions of the institution since October 7th*

We could not find any.

- *Relations with military and defence industry*

We could not find any.

- *Exchange agreement and joint membership in networks*

We do not have any.

2.8. Bloomfield Science Museum Jerusalem

- *Organisation, financing, origin of students*

Bloomfield Science Museum is a science museum in Jerusalem, established in 1992. It was born from the idea of Professor Hillman and a group of scholars from the Hebrew University with the goal of establishing a permanent space for exhibiting science in ways that will attract everyone. The group led by Professor Hillman established a non-profit called "Simply Science" for the purpose and set to work. "Simply Science" operated from the Givat Ram campus for ten years. The Bloomfield family funded the construction of the museum through the Eldee Foundation, and the Jerusalem Foundation was in charge of construction. The first wing of the science museum was opened in July 1992. The Hebrew University in Jerusalem, the Jerusalem Foundation and Prof. Hillman's original non-profit, "Simply Science," established a new non-profit – the Bloomfield Science Museum in Jerusalem. The current Chairman is Shlomo Yanai.

The Bloomfield Science Museum in Jerusalem receives funding from various sources, including government grants, private donations, corporate sponsorships, and ticket sales.

- *Changes and reactions of the institution since October 7th*

We could not find any. They simply have a counter on their webpage indicating how many days the Israeli hostages have been held by Hamas.

- *Relations with military and defence industry*

We could not find any.

- *Exchange agreement and joint membership in networks*

We do not have any.

2.9. Agricultural Research Organization – Volcani Center

- *Organisation, financing, origin of students*

The Agricultural Research Organization, Volcani Center is an agricultural research centre founded in 1921. The Centre has the mandate from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the State of Israel to support national agriculture research, focusing on plant sciences, animal sciences, plant protection, soil and environmental sciences, food sciences, and agricultural engineering. The organization was founded in 1921 in Ben Shemen, Israel, by Yitzhak Elazari Volcani, for whom it is named.

Little information is available on the current projects of the Centre, based on their website.

- *Changes and reactions of the institution since October 7th*

We could not find any.

- *Relations with military and defence industry*

We could not find any.

- *Exchange agreement and joint membership in networks*

We do not have any.

3. Education-related exchanges

As mentioned above we do not currently have an official exchange agreement with the Technion but have had in the past and maintain informal exchanges. At the present date, less than five of their students are at EPFL for the 2023-24 academic year and less than five are planned for the 2024-25 year. We have not authorized any outgoing exchanges this year or the next.

At the level of Doctoral studies, we presently have less than five visiting PhD students from Technion at EPFL in 2024, and we previously had less than five in 2022 and 2023. Research topics for these have no obvious potential for dual use.

We have no Bachelor's or Master's visitors from Israel. Please note that visitors do not come through institutional agreements. Finally, we do not have any EPFL Master's theses (PDMs) in Israel. According to our current rules, they are not allowed to make a PDM in Israel for security reasons⁵⁹.

4. Research projects

We have verified 22 collaborative research projects, of which 3 are SNSF projects, 13 are H2020 projects and 6 are Horizon Europe projects.

Before each project started, the regular Research Ethics assessment procedure was conducted by the Research Office (ReO), for each project individually. The procedure is described on the ReO website.⁶⁰ In addition to the EPFL procedures, all 19 (out of the 22) European projects (H2020 or Horizon Europe) underwent a verification by the European Committees.⁶¹

The ethics procedures at EPFL as well as those of the European Commission consist of a self-assessment by the PI and an evaluation by experts. At the European Commission these experts are ethics experts; at EPFL this task is done by the ReO program managers together with the ReO ethics team (two ethics experts).

The 22 research projects have all passed these ethics evaluations. No dual-use or defence alerts have been raised by the European Commission or the ReO.

⁵⁹

<https://www.epfl.ch/campus/mobility/mobility-and-travel/academic-travel/planning-your-trip/situation-in-the-middle-east/>

⁶⁰ <https://www.epfl.ch/research/ethic-statement/compliance/>.

⁶¹ https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/cross-cutting-issues/ethics_en.htm

For the current additional evaluation, the 22 research projects have additionally been analysed based on (i) the project abstract, (ii) internet search and website of the PI of the partner institution from Israel, and - for those cases where we considered that others might look for dual-use potential - (iii) with ChatGPT.

The results are as follows:

(i) None of the project abstracts indicates research aims related to defence.

(ii) One PI is involved in defence-related technologies and the word “defence” (radar systems) is mentioned as an application of the research activities on the PI’s website. One PI lists a defence-related project on the website.

(iii) One PI is characterised by ChatGPT as active in defence-related research, one PI is characterised as someone not involved in defence (however the laboratory website lists a defence-related project), one PI is characterised as having research interests related to defence, and one PI is characterised as someone covering work with significant applications in defence.

Three research projects in which EPFL is involved in collaborations involving the PIs mentioned in items II and III are European projects (Horizon Europe, H2020), one is a SNSF project.

More information on the topics of the research projects involving EPFL with the five above identified PIs from Israeli institutions can be found below:

- Project 1: Fundamental research on hardware for future smart wireless multimodal sensory systems. The project is not aimed at defence applications, but there are many possible applications (also radar/defence).
- Project 2: The aim is to develop and test a novel treatment for depression. The project is not aimed at defence applications, but there are many possible applications of the treatment.
- Project 3: European Plasma Research. The project is not aimed at defence applications.
- Project 4: It is fundamental research on foundations for Trustworthy AI. The project is not aimed at defence applications, but there are very many applications.

These are projects involving 4, 4, 33 and 54 partners. EPFL’s role in those projects is therefore diluted. Since these are collaborative research partnerships involving European laboratories, EPFL cannot leave the projects by unilateral decision, as this would mean a breach of contract.

The grant agreements of H2020 as well as Horizon Europe projects have references to respecting human rights. Horizon Europe grant agreements mention specifically respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of minorities in the grant agreement itself, while H2020 grant agreements refer to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

Finally, the 22 research projects themselves have no link to the Israel-based PI’s potential defence-related activities.

5. Innovation

Relations exist with Technion under the EuroTech alliance in the cross-cutting group Innovation. To our knowledge, these relations entail no concrete common innovative activity.

6. Relations with Israeli industry

Collaboration agreements with Israeli companies

Currently EPFL has no ongoing collaboration agreements where the contractual party is a company in Israel.

Start-ups

EPFL supports certain EPFL start-up projects through the Start-up Launchpad⁶². Those projects are often incubated in EPFL labs and obtain mentorship, guidance and fundings prior to incorporation of the startup.

Once a start-up is incorporated, it becomes a company which is independent from EPFL. From then on EPFL has no control over and no involvement in any business decision of the incorporated start-up. This applies also when EPFL is a shareholder of a start-up in the framework of a licence agreement, and EPFL is a minority shareholder with no decision power. EPFL is not represented on the board of the company, and it always abstains on any decision in the shareholders' general assembly.

Regarding the start-up projects currently running at EPFL, and more precisely those supported by the EPFL Start-up Launchpad, based on the information available to date and also according to our personal knowledge, none of the current start-up projects maintains partnerships nor research nor economic activities with companies, institutions or organisations located in/or with Israel.

Licensing

In the framework of licensing agreements and IP agreements, EPFL grants to incorporated start-ups and companies the right to use its patented technologies, and in case of jointly owned patents it agrees with the other universities on how to manage and licence the jointly owned patent. No collaboration activities are included in such agreements; however, EPFL is in principle available to provide scientific assistance for a few-months' duration, under separate agreements. In case the technology is licensed to a foreign entity, SECO export rules of dual-use goods are strictly followed and an authorisation is requested from SECO if needed. Active licences and IP agreements of EPFL with Israel concern two laboratories. Neither technology is related to military applications nor has specific characteristics that make the technology of particular interest to the military field.

7. Sponsors and donors

The EPFL Philanthropy team reviewed all the active donations within its portfolio. The donors consist of foundations, corporates, individuals and public entities.

⁶² <https://www.epfl.ch/innovation/startup/>

For each active donor, the team assessed the following criteria:

- Association of the supported project(s)/initiative(s) with Israel.
- Potential dual use of the above.
- Donor's possible connections with Israel (e.g., expressed opinions on their website, presence of offices in Israel).
- Any publication of an opinion related to the conflict authored by any of the contract's signatories, chairman/president of the board, and/or the CEO/managing director.

The team also used a Google tool to search for digital traces mentioning the donor, the contract's signatories, the chairman/president of the board, and the CEO/managing director with the following keywords:

"gaza-conflict-arrested-Netanyahu-bomb-war-sanctions-extremist-terrorism-palestine-palestinian-cisjordanie-Kibbutz-hostages-israeli-occupied-rafah-humanitarian-far-right-Hamas-Israel-sanctions".

There are 27 active donors with a potential (strong or weak) link with Israel, but none of the activities related to the donation, or activities of the donors in Israel can tangibly be directly related to the IDF or Israel's current actions in the Gaza strip.

III. Conclusions

Israeli universities and major research institutions have frequent and deep relations with the Israeli defence industry and forces, as witnessed by several research projects or subunits within those universities; however, EPFL does not have any defence-related activities with these institutions. As far as we could see, in their declarations, furthermore, none of the Israeli institutions of higher learning or research that EPFL interacts with has declared explicit support for the IDF's activities in Gaza. We have a declared partnership with the Technion (through EuroTech) and a few students on exchange; however, those interactions have no relation with, or involve EPFL in, the Israeli military or defence industry.

For research, although two of the Israel-based PIs involved in one of our 22 collaborative research projects with Israeli partners have stated defence-related activities on their websites and four in total were spotted by ChatGPT as being active in defence-related research, none of the 22 research collaborative projects that we have with Israeli partners have been found to be linked to those, or other defence-related, activities.

For innovation-related collaborative activities, none of EPFL's current start-up projects maintains partnerships, research or economic activities with companies, institutions or organisations located in/or with Israel. Currently EPFL has no ongoing collaboration agreements where the contractual party is a company in Israel. Active licences and IP agreements of EPFL with Israel concern two EPFL laboratories, on two technologies. Neither technology is related to military applications nor has specific characteristics that make the technology of particular interest to the military field.

Of the various donors to EPFL, the closest we found to activities directly related to the IDF or Israel's current actions in the Gaza strip are a multinational technology company, whose vast web of activities probably intersects with some defence-related activities in Israel, and a group who might in their wide portfolio of investments or clients have some that are related to

the Israeli defence industry. Given that EPFL lacks means to gain information on these matters, it is decided to flag those as orange, meaning that questions might be asked but are not of sufficient magnitude to motivate a refusal of the donation. All other donations to EPFL listed above are clearly flagged green.