

A Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Report for Universität Hamburg (UHH)

To uphold academic ethical responsibility, end
complicity with the ongoing genocide and violations of
International Law

by the BDS-UHH committee – spring 2026

bds-uhh.org



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Introduction

As students and workers of the University of Hamburg (UHH), we expect the university's administration to uphold its commitment to respecting international law and human rights, while also being faithful to its institutions ethical principles. These obligations extend to the universities and institutions with which the UHH partners.

In light of the ongoing war crimes, crimes against humanity, and breaches of international law committed by the State of Israel against the Palestinian population, the Lebanese and Iranian populations and other bordering peoples, we demand that the University take a stance against the institutions that are participating in them. Following the example set by many universities and student bodies across European Universities and worldwide, we believe in the importance of scrutinizing our academic collaborations to ensure that they align with these principles.

No university should contribute to violations of international law. Therefore, these universities have taken decisive steps to reassess their relationships with Israeli partners. By conducting a meticulous review and halting collaborations where necessary, they have set a precedent for ethical academic conduct. We urge the UHH to adopt a similar approach, and to ensure that our institution does not directly or indirectly support activities that violate international law and human rights.

This call is particularly pertinent in light of a statement made by the University of Hamburg itself shortly after the attacks of October 7th, 2023:

"The University of Hamburg is deeply shocked by the human suffering and condemns the terrible events of the past days. Our thoughts are with the victims and their families. We stand in solidarity with all academic institutions and our partner institutions in Israel. As a university, we stand for peace, democracy, humanity, and against hatred, violence, and war."

– October 11, 2023, Newsroom Editorial Team¹

If the University of Hamburg is serious about standing for peace, democracy, humanity, and against hatred, violence, and war, we expect that it will not apply double standards. If this commitment is to be taken seriously, the university must fulfill its responsibility and base its decisions on the facts presented below. The only consistent decision, given the ongoing conditions of genocidal war, occupation, and apartheid perpetrated by the Israeli government, is to end all collaborations with Israeli institutions.

Our goal is – as in the case of apartheid South Africa – to build pressure to end Apartheid and racial discrimination, perpetrated by the Israeli state.

Our call is not directed against cooperation with individuals, which can continue. Our call for boycott is specifically aimed at institutions, which necessarily bear shared responsibility for the actions of the Israeli state. We recognize that severing ties with

¹ <https://www.uni-hamburg.de/newsroom/im-fokus/2023/1011-statement-israel.html>

academic institutions will have an impact on individual students affiliated with them. However, we are convinced that these temporary restrictions are far outweighed by the positive developments that this step will help initiate – for the benefit of future generations as well.

Therefore, we are calling upon the UHH as an institution to:

1. Suspend all formal collaborations with Israeli universities and other complicit institutions in accordance with the PACBI guidelines.
2. Establish an academic research commission in order to investigate institutional responsibilities in the involvement of the UHH with Israeli institutions that breach international and humanitarian law. This commission is to integrate some of the persons involved in this campaign.

Along with this, we call our fellow students, academics, and workers of the UHH to:

1. Neither participate in nor support the concrete collaborations with Israeli universities and other complicit institutions that we detail in this report, or others.
2. Exert pressure in any form possible to end these collaborations, in accordance with your individual positions and possibilities.
3. Raise the subject in every academic instance possible, such as lectures, workshops, research reports or papers, academic conferences or talks, and others.
4. Boycott activities that normalize or advocate for Israel's genocide in Gaza and apartheid in Palestine.

Section 1: Preliminary explanations

The ethical commitment of the University of Hamburg and the ongoing genocide

The city of Hamburg with its harbor played a central role in trading colonial goods and upholding relations between colonial powers. The UHH has its own research center to investigate the city's complicity in colonial trade and its colonial legacy. Strong ties connect the founding of the university itself to Hamburg's colonial past. The Colonial Institute was founded in 1908 with the aim to train colonial officials, which after the first world war and the following loss of the colonies lost its purpose. The University of Hamburg was founded directly out of the Colonial Institute and its curriculum and building were partly integrated, to be used by the newly founded university.

The name of the senator of education in Hamburg at the time of the founding of the Colonial Institute Werner Von Melle is used in the naming of buildings and streets all around the university of Hamburg. Nowadays, his name is not connected to the colonial aspirations in Hamburg but as an important person in the history of the university, but he was one of the leading advocates of the founding of the Colonial Institutes.

The University of Hamburg claims to take responsibility for its colonial legacy by boasting its research center, but just like its predecessor the University of Hamburg actively supports another colonial project and genocide. Proudly showing off research on colonialism while supporting the colonial state of Israel is not only hypocritical but a continuation of the university's historical complicity in colonialism and imperialism. We as students cannot accept the university's double standards and must call out the complicity in another colonial occupation.²

The guiding principles of the University of Hamburg include the aim to contribute to a diverse and tolerant society. "As such, they are prepared and able to take an active role in shaping the social, economic, and ecological landscape in a sustainable, democratic, and peaceful manner within a larger global context; to initiate renewal and transformation processes; and to take responsibility for their future viability."

The research in collaboration with Israeli universities that play an active role in the genocide in Palestine contradicts the principle of studying, teaching and researching in a peaceful manner. The University is acting in extreme contrast to its own proclaimed principles. We as students urge the University to finally follow its own values.³

As stipulated in numerous UN resolutions, Israel has been in breach of international law since the Nakba of 1948 (UN. General Assembly, 1947, 1976, 1980, 2002, 2004, 2017, 2024; UN. Security Council, 1967). The Nakba, derived from *al-Nakba*, which means "the Catastrophe" in Arabic, refers to the ongoing displacement and dispossession of Palestinians from historic Palestine, beginning in 1948 and continuing to the present day

² <https://www.uni-hamburg.de/newsroom/19neunzehn/2020/0415-universitaetswerdung-teil-4.html>

³ <https://www.uni-hamburg.de/en/uhh/profil/leitbild/lehre.html>

as the structural denial of Palestinian self-determination through military occupation, mass incarceration, and the explicit ideology of Jewish supremacy, Zionism (Eghbariah, 2024).

In the latest phase of the Nakba, Israel is systematically destroying all conditions for Palestinian life in Gaza. On 26 January 2024, the International Court of Justice found that there is a plausible case that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza, mandating provisional measures that were reinforced on 28 March and 24 May (*Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel)*, 2024; Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, 2024). In accordance with article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,

genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (...)

This resolution by the International Court of Justice follows the consensus of humanitarian organizations on the matter (Amnesty International, 2022; *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel)*, 2024; B'Tselem & Forensic Architecture, n.d.; Muhareb et al., 2022). According to the December 5th of 2024 report from Amnesty International, Israel has killed more than 42,000 Palestinians in Gaza since October 7th of 2023, including over 13,300 children, and injured over 97,000 more, many of them in direct or deliberately indiscriminate attacks, often wiping out entire multigenerational families. The number of dead is likely underestimated — according to other reports, the actual death toll could exceed 186,000 (Khatib et al., 2024). Israel has also caused destruction at a level and speed not seen in any other conflict in the 21st century, leveling entire cities and destroying critical infrastructure, agricultural land and cultural and religious sites. Around 90% of Gaza's population had been displaced at least once by early July 2024. Already in January of 2024, over 70% of the physical infrastructure in the health, commerce, industry, services, information and communication technology (ICT), and municipal services sectors in Gaza had been damaged or destroyed. Nearly 84% of health facility buildings and 57% of water infrastructure were damaged or destroyed (World Bank, 2024). This damage has only increased in the following months, leaving entire regions of Gaza without buildings. Large swathes of Gaza are uninhabitable. The genocidal intent has been thoroughly proven not only by the statements of Israeli government officials, high-ranking military officers and members of the Knesset, but also by videos, photographs, and audio recordings shared on social media by Israeli soldiers (Amnesty International, 2024a).

In accordance with all this, the International Criminal Court has already issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Israeli Minister of

Defence Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity (International Criminal Court, 2024), which Germany has a legally binding obligation to act upon.

Furthermore, Israel continues to break international law by denying Palestinian refugees their right of return as stipulated in UN resolution 194 and continuing to illegally occupy the Occupied Palestinian Territories (the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip) and the Golan Heights, imposing Martial Law to its inhabitants since 1967 and breaking UN resolution 242 (*Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, 2024; Quigley, 2007*). Between 1 November 2022 and 31 October 2023, the number of Israeli settler outposts increased to 162, while the Israeli government approved 24,300 housing units within existing Israeli settlements, including 9,670 housing units in East Jerusalem. 917 Palestinian-owned structures were demolished. 2023 was the year in which settlements expanded at the highest rate since monitoring began in 2017 (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2024). On 19 July 2024, the International Court of Justice deemed Israel's prolonged military occupation of Palestine to be in violation of international law, and thus illegal. This is the first time since 2004 that the ICJ has made such a clear ruling on Israel's illegal occupation, substantiating that the illegality of Israel's occupation of Gaza did not begin in response to the attacks committed by Hamas against Israel on 7 October 2023. Instead, Israel has been creating and maintaining the conditions of apartheid and illegal occupation for decades. Furthermore, Israel has waged war and acts of aggression on the populations of Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and Iran, illegally occupying new areas and preparing annexations of already occupied lands.

The UHH as an educational institution has a particular commitment to stand in solidarity with the eradicated higher education institutions in Gaza, and with the many thousands of murdered university students and staff, the victims of what the United Nations has deemed "scholasticide". By April 2024, more than 5,479 students, 261 teachers, and 95 university professors had been killed in Gaza, and over 7,819 students and 756 teachers had been injured. At least 60% of educational facilities, including 13 public libraries, had been damaged or destroyed and at least 625,000 students have no access to education. The last standing University in Gaza was demolished by the IDF on 17 January 2024 (OHCHR, 2024).

All the numbers mentioned in this report are significantly higher to date, as the genocide in Gaza and the apartheid in Palestine are ongoing. It is the ethical responsibility of individuals and institutions to do everything in their power to stop these actions. This responsibility is part of the collective historical duty stemming from the Holocaust, recognized by the international community in international human rights law. For this reason, Germany should be at the forefront of these efforts, not obstructing them. Never again is for all.

The findings presented in this report imply that the UHH as a public German University has a social and academic responsibility to reevaluate its institutional ties which are heavily implicated in violations of the generally accepted set of values of international law.

The Call for a Boycott

The fundamental drive of our program is boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS). BDS is a long-established international movement that seeks to challenge the international legitimacy of the Israeli military regime by encouraging institutions, nations, and companies to cut ties with Israel.

The movement follows the strategy used against the South African apartheid. During that period, BDS movements had a profound effect on the legitimacy of the racist regime, forcing it into increasing isolation and weakening the possibility of the regime's survival. While it was the struggle of Black South Africans for liberation from apartheid that ultimately ended the brutal regime, BDS campaigns drastically diminished the possibility of apartheid authorities finding international support.

In line with the consensus of humanitarian organizations, BDS movements today maintain that Israel is an apartheid state that is currently committing genocide in Gaza. Many global academic organizations integrated by German organizations and academics ([Annex 2](#)) have passed resolutions calling to boycott Israeli academic institutions.⁴

BDS is a call to governments, institutions, and individuals to boycott, financially divest, or sanction Israel, Israeli institutions and other organizations complicit with the genocide and apartheid. This is a form of non-violent pressure on Israel.

The boycott of Israeli academic institutions subscribes to the definition of academic freedom adopted by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights in resolution E/C.12/1999/10 ([Scholars at Risk, 2024](#)), in which it is also recognized that any kind of restriction that the State may impose following article 4 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights “is primarily intended to be protective of the rights of individuals rather than permissive of the imposition of limitations by the State” ([Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1999](#)).

In any case, the academic boycott of Israeli universities and institutions does not seek to boycott individual researchers, but rather to hold Israeli academic institutions that actively support the ongoing oppression and occupation of Palestinians accountable. In accordance with the guidelines for the academic boycott of Israel set up by the international Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) initiated in 2004, the boycott does not target individual researchers who are affiliated with Israeli academic institutions but is rather directed towards Israeli academic institutions themselves ([2014](#)).

Individuals may only be boycotted in two specific cases:

- i) In response to their complicity in, responsibility for, or advocacy of violations of international law or other human rights violations, or
- ii) Representatives of complicit Israeli institutions (such as a university president or spokesperson).

⁴ <https://bds-fu.de/en/report/#academic-freedom-and-the-case-for-boycott>

An academic boycott is not an infringement of academic freedom, but rather a manifestation of it. Thus, the BDS call is an expression of freedom of speech protected under Article 5 Abs. 1 Satz 1 of the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany, which states:

“Every person shall have the right freely to express and disseminate his opinions in speech, writing and pictures and to inform himself without hindrance from generally accessible sources. Freedom of the press and freedom of reporting by means of broadcasts and films shall be guaranteed. There shall be no censorship.”

Abs. 3 of the same article adds under the same principle that “Arts and sciences, research and teaching shall be free”, while Abs. 2 indicates that this right can only be restricted through “*general laws, in provisions for the protection of young persons and in the right to personal honour*”. Neither the IHRA, nor any of the quoted resolutions of the Bundestag have the character of a general law as specified there.

Furthermore, the protection of the call for a boycott has been recognized by Germany’s Federal Constitutional Court in the so-called “Lüth-ruling” as an expression of freedom of speech (*Beschluss des Ersten Senats vom 15. Januar 1958, 1958*). This even applies in the case of public employees (as the person that called for a boycott in that case was) and – as we will see – of public institutions.

The precedent of Russia

On 25 February 2022, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) announced the decision to restrict German-Russian exchange relations. The institution stopped the applications for Russia scholarships, canceled scholarships to Russia, and even froze financial support for German students who had already been selected for funding for a planned stay in Russia. Justifying the decision, its President Joybrato Mukherjee commented that “in view of the war, we believe it is imperative to critically review the promotion of exchange relations with Russia” (*DAAD, 2022*). The announcement also said that the institution expected to suspend all DAAD-funded project activities with partner institutions in Russia and Belarus.

In March of 2022 the institute of Slavistics of the University of Hamburg released a statement on the attack of Russia on Ukraine. They declared their solidarity with “all faculty and students and people, who are in Russia, Belarus and speak out against the attack on Ukraine, which violates international law.”⁵ Since then the University of Hamburg has started “#UHHhilft Ukraine” supporting students (Ukrainian and Russian) who are directly impacted by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine⁶ and temporarily suspended all institutional cooperation activities with Russian institutions⁷. This proves that the UHH is capable of distinguishing between individual and institutional boycott.

⁵ <https://www.slm.uni-hamburg.de/slavistik/ueber-das-institut/ukraine/stellungnahme.html>

⁶ <https://www.uni-hamburg.de/uhhhilft-ukraine.html>

⁷ <https://taz.de/Wissenschafts-Kooperationen-mit-Russland/!5843102/>

The Russian case sets a precedent for the UHH severing ties with educational institutions. Clearly, the UHH has recent prior experience in the bureaucratic and administrative aspects of participating in a boycott.

Section 2: Israeli educational institutions' ties to the Military and their complicity with apartheid and the ongoing genocide

The war crimes, crimes against humanity — including genocide — and infringements of international Law that are committed by the State of Israel are directly supported by Israeli universities, which develop the technology and machinery for war, and contribute to juridical, operational, and technological support for the continued occupation of Palestine. In this report, the infringements of the largest Israeli Universities will be detailed, concentrating on the University of Haifa because it is the main institution with which the UHH holds academic relations.

Tel Aviv University, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Bar-Ilan University, Israel Institute of Technology, Weizmann Institute of Science

Tel Aviv University has exceptionally close ties to the Israeli government and the military industry ([Rapoport, 2023](#)). It hosts the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), which aims to shape the “national security policies” of the regime. One such policy was formulated during the 2021 attack on Gaza and advocated denying the entry of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian population as a military strategy, something we now see after 7 October 2023. Tel Aviv University also developed the Dahiya Doctrine in partnership with the Israeli military in 2008 ([IMEU, 2024](#); [Rogers, 2023](#)), which calls for targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure with “disproportionate force” to inflict devastating destruction. This is a war crime. Nevertheless, this doctrine has been used in all subsequent military attacks on Gaza, including the current genocide.

The **Ben-Gurion University** of the Negev hosts the Homeland Security Institute which partners with Elbit System and Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, as well as the Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), and the Ministry of Defense. Ben-Gurion University provides financial support for students that join the IDF, including grant and a postponement of their rental fees if they were living in university dormitories ([Fiske, 2023](#)). The University's company BGN Technologies conducts “research for companies wishing to take advantage of [Ben-Gurion University]’s expertise and facilities” ([Ben-Gurion University, n.d.](#)). In this context, the University directly partnered with the IDF's elite intelligence division, Unit 8200, in order to develop Lavender, the AI-based recognition program used by the IDF ([Bolliger et al., 2024](#); [Iraqi, 2024](#)) to mark individuals as bombing targets, and Gospel, an AI-enabled system to determine targets ([Gedeon, 2024](#)).

The **Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJ)** is partly built in East Jerusalem, which is illegally occupied according to international law. The HUJ supports “Operation Iron Sword” (the IDF's code name for their current operation in Gaza) by “providing military units with logistics equipment” ([HUJ, 2023](#)). HUJ expertise in social science has been instrumental for sustaining and expanding the occupation. Their archaeology department

has been systematically involved in the erasure of Islamic history in Jerusalem and structural damage to Palestinian homes and buildings, the most recent case being the excavations of the “Path of the Pilgrims” for its inauguration in 2019 (Wind, 2024, pp. 33–24). The Institute of Criminology of the HUU provides academic formation for the Israeli police apparatus, developing so-called “counterterrorism policing” expertise. It has been reported that the faculty has even brought delegates to observe checkpoints and the surveillance systems of occupied East Jerusalem (Wind, 2024, pp. 42–43). Meanwhile, the Middle East studies department housed the elite degree Havatzalot program for soldiers of the Intelligence Corps of the IDF as part of their military training (Lappin, 2013).

The **Bar-Ilan University’s** Engineering Faculty has held “hackathons” in collaboration with the Israeli military and with the Israeli arms producer Elbit (Faculty of Engineering Bar-Ilan University, 2023). Importantly, they established a college – now the independent Ariel University – on illegally occupied Palestinian land. Such settlements constitute war crimes under international law.

The **Israel Institute of Technology, Technion**, also has deep ties to the Israeli military. It helped develop the D9 remote-controlled bulldozer, which has been used throughout Palestine to destroy and demolish Palestinian homes. In 2008 Technion opened a center for the development of electro-optics with Elbit Systems, one of the largest Israeli weapons companies. It also developed “The Scream”, a vehicle-mounted sonic blaster that shoots repeated pulses of sound unbearable to humans, leaving them dizzy and nauseous at distances of up to 100 meters. The weapon has been widely used to suppress Palestinian protests (Rawnsley, 2011).

Finally, the **Weizmann Institute of Science** regularly collaborates with Israel’s weapons manufacturers such as Elbit Systems and Israel Aerospace Industries. It was even the origin of one of the most important Israeli defense companies, as academics from this institute and the Technion founded Rafael Advanced Defense Systems. The institute has a special MA program for personnel serving in the IDF (Weizmann School of Science, 2016), and also has a pre-military academy that prepares high school seniors for “meaningful military service” (Weizmann Institute of Science, 2020).

The University of Haifa

The University of Haifa is complicit in the genocide and apartheid of Israel. It is the primary home of academics for the IDF since 2018, when they started to be the first institution to give out academic degrees for command forces of the IDF and generally in the intelligence services, such as Mossad and Shin Bet. This is the result of the University winning a tender, which means that the University of Haifa actively chose this task and applied to take it over from the Israeli Ministry of defence. To house this program the University of Haifa created the “Military College Administration”.

The University of Haifa houses multiple military colleges that are part of the so-called “Military College Administration.” This administration organizes programs for the University of Haifa, which in turn awards academic degrees to senior levels of the IDF

command. The "Military College Administration" includes IDF War College, Israeli National Defense College and the Tactical Command College.

Through these colleges, the University of Haifa offers specific master's programs for IDF senior command. It is the IDF's academic home-ground in which its officers are trained in topics such as "security" matters, these "security" matters mainly concern the effort to control and suppress Palestinians. There are multiple tracks for the students in these master's programs. There are two graduate and five undergraduate courses. The fields they cover are Economics (Business Administration track), Political Science, Communications, Computer Sciences, Psychology and Education. In general the different colleges train a wide range of officers in all kinds of different programs to further enhance the academic arm of the IDF and other Israeli forces. The cooperation was founded to streamline the academic progress and give greater consistency to the training of the officers.

These programs blur the line between what is a university campus and what is a military training base. They are part of the normalization of the IDF within broader society and contribute to integrating it into civilian life. In addition to enhancing the education of the IDF command staff – they also serve to strengthen the IDF's claim to legitimacy as a professional institution, not the colonial force it actually is.

Not only does the University of Haifa provide resources and manpower in training the main enforcer of the ongoing genocide and apartheid, the Military college Administration also acts as an institution to normalize hyper militarized academics.^{8 9 10 11}

The General Problem of Israeli Educational Institutions

Israeli universities point to their Arab (Palestinian) students as proof of their plurality and diversity. However, Palestinian students have long been criminalized and targeted by their universities (Adalah, 2024; Green & Gordon, 2024; Middle East Monitor, 2014; The New Arab Staff, 2023). This has only increased since the 7th of October 2023.

At the University of Haifa, over 90 percent of the students summoned to disciplinary committees between 2002 and 2010 were Palestinian. Between 2010 and 2015, Palestinian students were three times as likely as Jewish students to be summoned before their committees (Adalah UN Report, 2024; Green & Gordon, 2024).

What we have described here is only a very brief overview. As Israeli scholar Maya Wind meticulously documented, all major public Israeli universities “operate in direct service of the state and serve critical functions in sustaining its policies, and thereby constitute central pillars of Israeli settler colonialism” (Wind, 2024).

⁸ <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/university-of-haifa-to-be-first-college-to-grant-degrees-to-officers-560810>

⁹ <https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/247962>

¹⁰ <https://www.haifa.ac.il/military-colleges-administration-mca/?lang=en>

¹¹ <https://magazine.haifa.ac.il/index.php/winter-2018/113-university-of-haifa-to-lead-israel4>

Section 3: Universität Hamburg ties to Israeli academic institutions

Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Haifa.

The Faculty of Humanities of the University of Haifa and the faculty of Humanities of the UHH signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2023. The purpose of this memorandum is to further research, teaching as well as educational and cultural understanding, between the two institutions. Furthermore, the goal is also to “protect and realize scientific freedom, to contribute to the shaping of a peaceful and humane world, to foster the right to education, to promote gender equality, and to honor cultural diversity”.¹²

The memorandum intends to start a few different cooperations, which are exchanges of students, staff, academics and publications as well as joint programs, research and lectures. The memorandum also explicitly states that certain communication between the universities is supposed to be confidential and should be inaccessible to third parties. The memorandum also includes a clause which states that the research is only allowed to be used for civilian purposes.¹³ It is impossible to tell if that clause is adhered to as long as the possibility of confidential communication exists.

It is unconscionable of the UHH to cooperate and even more to agree to such a memorandum with a faculty of a university that trains the command staff of the IDF as shown in section 2 of this report. The faculty of Humanities isn't just a part of the University of Haifa but also directly works with the faculties which train the IDF command staff. The stated goals of a peaceful and humane world can not be reached in a cooperation with the University of Haifa.

Israeli participation in Horizon Europe

Horizon Europe is a EU funding program for research and innovation. With a budget of around €95.5 billion, it funds sustainable scientific research to promote Europe's competitiveness and growth.

Israeli institutions get the chance to apply for Horizon funding because of the association agreement between Israel and the EU. The agreement itself states that the basis of the collaboration with the Israeli state depends heavily on the “*principles of the human rights charter, particularly the observance of human rights and democracy*”¹⁴. Upholding the commitments written in the agreement is supposed to be a crucial element of having Israel included in the Horizon program. In July 2025, the European Commission issued a proposal to partly suspend Israeli participation which would have mostly impacted startups and smaller businesses with potential dual use research¹⁵. The proposal to

¹² MOU between the University of Haifa and the University of Hamburg

¹³ MOU between the University of Haifa and the University of Hamburg

¹⁴ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/asso_agree_en.pdf

¹⁵ https://germany.representation.ec.europa.eu/news/kommissions-vorschlag-assoziierung-israels-mit-eu-forschungsprogramm-horizont-europa-aussetzen-2025-07-29_de

partially suspended Israeli institution due to human rights violations failed to succeed. Main objections came from Germany.

Problematic funding of Israeli institutions

The predecessor program *Horizon 2020* secured a total of €1.3 billion in funding for Israeli projects. Since the start of *Horizon Europe* until April 2025 Israeli projects received €831 million (EU-Israel research and innovation cooperation - Research and innovation).¹⁶ Many Israeli institutions profit from Horizon funding, some of which should be looked at critically.

Skylord Xtender

One of those projects is the startup *Skylord Xtender* which received €50,000. The company's report suggests that the grant was used to evaluate the possibilities of "*our novel Skylord Xtender drone system... for the intuitive control of drones in indoor and GPRS denied environments*" (Millions in EU funds have gone to Israeli defence industry, investigation finds – The Irish Times)¹⁷. Those drones are designed to remotely control military actions from far distances. The last years saw countless reports of Israeli drone use in Gaza. The funding of a startup that works closely with the Israeli military and researches the possibilities of drones therefore has a high possibility of directly impacting the lives of Palestinians in Gaza (DOD, Israel Pick Skylord Xtender Small UAS for Remote Operations Support – The National Robotics Education Foundation)¹⁸.

Quantify

The Quantify project is another Horizon project in which UHH participates. One of the main collaborators is the French arms manufacturer, Thales¹⁹. Thales has sold equipment for Israeli drones that are highly likely to have been used on Palestinian civilians²⁰. The research project *Quantify* focuses on the improvement of sensors by developing more efficient quantum-enhanced sensors²¹. On its own website Thales advertises its advanced sensors for military purposes²². The University of Hamburg actively chooses to research in partnership with a company that is known to have sold military equipment to Israel. Our university is directly taking part in research that can be used to improve military equipment that is being used against Palestinian civilians. Therefore it is responsible for Palestinian deaths. Research at our university should not be allowed to be used by arm manufacturers to improve their technologies. This cooperation must stop!

¹⁶ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/news/all-research-and-innovation-news/eu-israel-research-and-innovation-cooperation-2025-04-02_en

¹⁷ <https://www.irishtimes.com/world/middle-east/2025/08/30/investigation-millions-in-eu-funds-have-gone-to-israeli-defence-industry/>

¹⁸ <https://www.the-nref.org/content/dod-israel-pick-skylord-xtender-small-uas-remote-operations-support>

¹⁹ <https://www.quantify-project.eu/consortium/>

²⁰ <https://disclose.ngo/en/article/arms-sales-to-israel-frances-thales-supplying-equipment-for-armed-drones-since-2018>

²¹ <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101135931>

²² <https://www.thalesgroup.com/en/solutions-catalogue/defence/collaborative-combat>

What should the University of Hamburg do?

We must criticize the UHH for taking part in horizon projects that directly harm Palestinians. This program should exclude Israeli institutions based on human rights violations and the University of Hamburg's cooperation with arms suppliers must be stopped. Such programs further the normalization of cooperation with a genocidal state and the funding of complicit companies and universities. The University of Hamburg actively chooses not to stand against an ongoing genocide and the use of money for military research.

Minerva Center for the rule of law under extreme conditions

One of longest standing cooperations between UHH and the University of Haifa is the *Minerva center for the Rule of law under extreme conditions*.

The official Website of the Minerva program describes Minerva Centers as following: "Minerva Centers are scientific pioneer institutions with a focus on innovative research topics in Israel and are funded by the Minerva Foundation, the German Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space and the particular host university where the Center is based. The research at the Centers is carried out in cooperation with German partners."²³

The Minerva Center for the rule of law describes itself in the following terms:

*"The Minerva Center for the Rule of Law under Extreme Conditions at the University of Haifa Faculty of Law and the Geography and Environmental Studies Department, is an international venue and transnational forum – together with the University of Hamburg, for study, research, training, education and publication. Its mission is to focus on the rule of law, broadly defined to include policy and regulation, under three main types of extreme conditions: natural disasters (epidemics, floods, storms, fires, earthquakes); national security challenges (wars, terrorism, counter terrorism, cyber-terrorism and military actions); and socioeconomic crises (economic meltdowns and severe sociopolitical fragmentation)."*²⁴

Thus, the goal of this program, funded by the German state and Haifa university, is to shape policy regarding Israel's military and police apparatus under the guise of maintaining "*the rule of law*".

Why legal studies in Israel are not neutral

Law faculties across Israel play a major role in shaping and justifying Israeli military doctrine that in comparable situations, but perpetrated by other actors, would clearly be flagged as violations of international and humanitarian law.²⁵

²³ <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/minerva-centers>

²⁴ <https://minervaxtremelaw.haifa.ac.il/about-the-center/>

²⁵ Maya Wind: Towers of ivory and steel

Since the second Intifada in the beginning of the millennium, Israeli legal scholars have argued that Israel engages in an “armed conflict short of war” and for that reason international rules regarding warfare and the protection of civilians could not be applied to Israel. The national security college of the university of Haifa, for example, is responsible for developing Israel’s “*ethical doctrine for combating terror*”; a document which was broadly regarded as Israel’s “counter terror doctrine” and which is the basis for its military guidelines.²⁶ A further example of direct cooperation between Israeli legal studies and its armed forces used to develop and justify Israeli military doctrine is the Institute of national security studies (INSS) at Tel Aviv University. Headed by a Major General of the Israeli Military, the institute’s legal scholars have continuously argued that international law doesn’t apply to Israel’s “War on Terror.” The academics go as far as proposing a new legal category between combatants and civilians called “third population” regarding Palestinian civilians.²⁷

In light of this, we can assess that Israeli legal studies, such as the Minerva center for the rule of law under extreme conditions, are not neutral institutions. Especially in the field of national security they serve specific purposes for the Israeli state; they shape and justify Israeli policy regarding military action and repressions against the Palestinian people.

This assessment becomes all the more clear as we look at specific research undertaken by the Minerva center for the rule of law, to which we come in the following:

The Use of Military AI Tools vs. “Traditional” Decision-Making in Targeting Processes

According to its website²⁸ and its 2024 annual report²⁹, this project is dedicated to “contribute(s) to ongoing debates by offering empirical data on the intersection of law, ethics, and AI-driven military operations. The findings will help refine policies on AI usage in warfare and inform future regulations to ensure responsible AI integration in combat settings.” It tries to achieve this aim utilizing the following method:

“Participants will be placed in simulated decision-making scenarios where they assess target intelligence generated by either AI or human analysts. A key question in this research is whether decision-makers will show greater deference to AI-generated intelligence, given its perceived objectivity and efficiency, or whether they will rely more on traditional human-based assessments due to concerns over AI’s limitations and accountability gaps. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for evaluating the implications of AI integration in military operations and its potential to reshape targeting protocols.”³⁰

²⁶ Maya Wind: Towers of ivory and steel

²⁷ Maya Wind: Towers of ivory and steel

²⁸ <https://minervaxtremelaw.haifa.ac.il/2025/06/19/the-use-of-military-ai-tools-vs-traditional-decision-making-in-targeting-processes/>

²⁹ <https://minervaxtremelaw.haifa.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Minerva-RLuEC-Annual-report-2024-March-2025.pdf>

³⁰ <https://minervaxtremelaw.haifa.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Minerva-RLuEC-Annual-report-2024-March-2025.pdf>

It is important to know that the testimonies of six anonymous Israeli intelligence officers, who served during the Genocide on Gaza and had first-hand experience with this system, report that the Israeli army relied almost entirely on the AI-targeting System “Lavender” for target identification in the first weeks of the genocide. During that time, the system flagged up to 37,000 Palestinians as suspected militants, marking them and their homes for possible airstrikes. A second AI system named “Where’s Daddy?” was built specifically to track when they are in their family homes, rather than during military activity, to bomb them then. The report states that the system accepted the death of 15-20 civilians on a single low-ranking Hamas or Islamic Jihad (PIJ) fighter and the death of over 100 civilians on a single high-ranking commander, as collateral damage.³¹

This research project not only examines the effect AI-generated intelligence has on military decisions makers, thus providing useful Information for the further use of AI-guided targeting for the Israeli military regarding its genocide in Gaza and beyond, but also aims to shape policy and regulation regarding AI-usage in warfare, thereby contributing to giving it a legal framework and aiding the continued implementation of a system that is responsible for targeting tens of thousands of Palestinians by the Israeli armed forces.

To conclude, the "Minerva Center for the rule of law under extreme conditions" serves to shape and justify Israeli policy regarding military action and repression against the Palestinian people, under the guise of maintaining the rule of law. While being complicit on a broader level as part of Israeli legal studies, it also specifically initiates research which contributes to the Israeli military and repression apparatus, such as working to create a legal framework for the continued use of AI-targeting against Palestinians. The very Israeli Security apparatus that is currently conducting a genocide in Gaza and is, as stated by several human rights organizations, guilty of enforcing a system of Apartheid against the Palestinian people in total.

By cooperating with the University of Haifa through the Minerva Center for the rule of law under extreme conditions UHH is at least indirectly, if not directly aiding Israel to commit these crimes against humanity and thus making itself complicit in these crimes.

Ties to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Since the onset of the genocide in Gaza, the University of Hamburg (UHH) has further intensified its institutional ties with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Both humanities faculties have signed a so-called “Memorandum of Understanding,” expressing their shared interest in advancing joint research programs and academic exchanges.

Resources allocated by UHH to the Hebrew University could contribute—directly or indirectly—to the production of cultural or historical narratives that are used to justify ongoing settlement activities in Palestine. In the past, NGOs, human rights organizations, and scholars from critical academic circles have argued that activities such as archaeological excavations have been instrumentalized to displace Palestinians, promote settler tourism, and support the expansion of Israeli settlements.

³¹ <https://verfassungsblog.de/gaza-artificial-intelligence-and-kill-lists/>

Particularly concerning is the agreement on an official exchange program between the two institutions. The humanities faculty of the Hebrew University, as well as student housing facilities, are located on Mount Scopus in East Jerusalem. This implies that students from UHH may be encouraged to study in an area that is regarded under international law as part of the illegally occupied territory of East Jerusalem.

In effect, UHH is thereby promoting academic activities that may involve living and working on land considered, under international law, to belong to the Palestinian population rather than to Israeli occupying authorities.

Other cooperations with Israeli academic institutions

Projects	Cooperating Institutions
Agreement of Exchange of students (Laufzeit 2023-2028)	Universität Hamburg (UHH) und Universität Tel Aviv
von der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) gefördertes Projekt „Reduktion des Stress-induzierten Wechsels zum gewohnheitsbasierten Lernen durch hippocampale Neuromodulation	UHH, Fakultät für Psychologie und Bewegungswissenschaft (Kognitionspsychologie) und Tel Aviv Universität
DFG-Langfristvorhaben „Premodern Philosophic and Scientific Hebrew Terminology in Context. An Online Thesaurus“.	UHH, Fakultät für Geisteswissenschaften (Institut für Jüdische Philosophie und Religion und Hebräische Universität Jerusalem
Joseph Carlebach Arbeitskreis	UHH, Fakultät Geisteswissenschaften (Institut für die Geschichte der deutschen Juden) und Bar Ilan Universität Ramat Gan
Projekt zur Digitalisierung von schriftlichen Werken deutsch-jüdischer Intellektueller	UHH, Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) und Nationalbibliothek Israel
Projekt „CAVIFOS – Optimization and Implementation of ceftazidime or ceftazidime-avibactam combined with fosfomycin against highly resistant gram-negative bacteria“	UHH, Fakultät für Mathematik, Informatik und Naturwissenschaften (Fachbereich Chemie) und Ben Gurion Universität Negev
Deutsch-Israelische Projektkooperation “Holography and the Swampland: Constraints on theories of fundamental physics from compatibility with quantum gravity”	UHH, Fakultät für Mathematik, Informatik und Naturwissenschaften (Fachbereich Physik) und Ben Gurion Universität Negev
Climate Change as Unjust Enrichment	UHH, Fakultät für Rechtswissenschaft und Bar Ilan Universität Ramat Gan
DFG-Zuwendung im trilateralen Projekt „Transnational Palestinian Families in the West Bank, Israel and Germany. A trilateral study of changing gender	UHH, Fakultät Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften (Fachbereich Sozialökonomie) und Universität Haifa

relations, marriage patterns and honor semantics.”	
Vorhaben unter Förderung der VW-Stiftung zur Untersuchung zu quantenmechanischen Mechanismen	UHH, Fakultät für Mathematik, Informatik und Naturwissenschaften (Fachbereich Physik) und Hebräische Universität Jerusalem, Universität Haifa
DFG-Projekt zur Untersuchung von molekularen Kontakten unter dem Einfluss des Solvents	UHH, Fakultät für Mathematik, Informatik und Naturwissenschaften (Fachbereich Physik) und Universität Tel Aviv
Wissenschaftlicher Austausch im Bereich des Quantentransports in Nanosystemen	UHH, Fakultät für Mathematik, Informatik und Naturwissenschaften (Fachbereich Physik) und Technische Universität Israel Technion
„Graphene, FET Flagship“	UHH, Fakultät für Mathematik, Informatik und Naturwissenschaften (Fachbereich Physik) und Technische Universität Israel Technion
„Human Brain Project“, FET Flagship”	UHH, Fakultät für Psychologie und Bewegungswissenschaft (Psychologie) und Bloomfield Science Museum, Weizmann Institute of Science, Hebräische Universität Jerusalem und Universität Tel Aviv
Socrates – H2020 Marie Curie ITN Doktorandennetzwerk	UHH, Fakultät für Mathematik, Informatik und Naturwissenschaften (Fachbereich Informatik) und Ben Gurion Universität Negev
Saltgiant – H2020 Marie Curie ITN Doktorandennetzwerk	UHH, Fakultät für Mathematik, Informatik und Naturwissenschaften (Fachbereich Geologie) und Israelisches Energieministerium
FutureMARES – H2020 Research and Innovation Action (Verbundprojekt mit 35 Partnereinrichtungen)	UHH, Fakultät für Mathematik, Informatik und Naturwissenschaften (Fachbereich Biologie) und Israel Oceanographic and Limnological Research Ltd.
FOCI – HORIZON Europe Research and Innovation Action (Verbundprojekt mit 14	UHH, Fakultät für Mathematik, Informatik und Naturwissenschaften (Erdsystemwissenschaften) und Universität

Partnereinrichtungen)	Tel Aviv
CISSE – HORIZON Europe Marie Curie DN Doktorandennetzwerk	UHH, Fakultät für Mathematik, Informatik und Naturwissenschaften (Fachbereich Chemie) und Hebräische Universität Jerusalem sowie Weizmann Institute of Science
CVDLink – HORIZON Europe Research and Innovation Action (Verbundprojekt mit 19 Partnereinrichtungen)	UHH, Fakultät für Mathematik, Informatik und Naturwissenschaften (Fachbereich Informatik) und Medical Research Foundation Development of Infrastructure and Health Services Near Hillel Yaffe Medical Center, Israelisches Gesundheitsministerium
Intellexus – HORIZON Europe ERC Synergy Grant	UHH, Fakultät für Geisteswissenschaften (Asien-Afrika-Institut) und Reichman Universität Tel Aviv
Memorandum of Understanding	Universitätsklinikum Hamburg-Eppendorf (UKE) und Tel Aviv Medical Center (Ichilov)
Collaboration Agreement between Medical Faculties	UKE und Universität Tel Aviv
Long-standing collaboration with European Molecular Biology Laboratory Hamburg (EMBL)	UKE und Weizmann Institute of Science
Verwertungsvereinbarung	UKE und Weizmann Institute of Science
Human Frontier Science Program (HFSP) Project "Intracellular voltage control of directional cell migration."	UKE und Weizmann Institute of Science
Gastprofessur am UKE	UKE und Hadassah Universität / Medical Centre Jerusalem

Table 1: Project names are listed in German to avoid incorrect translation of original source – Bürgerschaft Hamburg³²

³² [https://www.buergerschaft-hh.de/parldok/dokument/90935/23_00325_geplante_partnerschaft_zwischen_der_universitaet_hamburg_und_der_universitaet_haifa#search="Schlagworte%3a+Israel"%23navpanes=0](https://www.buergerschaft-hh.de/parldok/dokument/90935/23_00325_geplante_partnerschaft_zwischen_der_universitaet_hamburg_und_der_universitaet_haifa#search=)

Conclusion

The aim of this report is to outline legal, ethical, and critical elements to advocate for a boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) campaign in the UHH targeting Israel, based on the violations to international law, including war crimes, and genocide against Palestinians. The desired objective is that the UHH cut ties with Israeli educational institutions, and to institute a commission to determine the institutional responsibilities in the involvement of the UHH with these infringements.

The overwhelming consensus of humanitarian international institutions establishes that the state of Israel is currently committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza. The ICJ has ruled the plausibility of a genocide, and the ICC has already issued warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Israeli Minister of Defence Yoav Gallant. Along with this, the ICJ has recognized that Israel has been creating and maintaining the conditions of apartheid and carrying out an illegal occupation in Palestinian territories.

As has been shown, the Israeli academic institutions actively contribute to these infractions of international law. The ongoing research projects and exchange programs with Israeli institutions contribute to normalizing apartheid and the illegal occupation of Palestine. However, through the joint research projects with Israeli academic institutions, the UHH also risks direct involvement and complicity with the criminal actions of the Israeli State. That is why it is necessary and urgent to set up an academic research commission to investigate individual and institutional responsibilities.

It is part of the ethical and legal responsibility of the UHH to not collaborate with institutions that enable genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Considering this, this report defends the boycott as a legitimate form of non-violent resistance. However, as is public knowledge, the BDS movement in Germany is heavily criminalized and the actions of the German State and its state-funded institutions endanger the exercise of academic freedom as a result of this persecution. To advocate for boycott, the report shows that the call for BDS is protected by law. Second, it also argues that German higher education institutions have actual experience in cutting ties with educational institutions following similar ethical guidelines established by BDS, distinguishing clearly between a boycott against institutions and a boycott against individuals.

We reiterate our call to our fellow students, academics, and workers of UHH to neither participate in nor support concrete collaborations with Israeli universities and other complicit institutions, and to exert pressure to end these collaborations, to raise the subject in every academic instance possible, and to boycott activities that normalize or advocate for Israel's genocide in Gaza and apartheid in Palestine. As for the UHH as an institution, it must suspend all formal collaborations with complicit institutions in accordance with PACBI guidelines, and establish an academic research commission in order to investigate individual and institutional responsibilities, which should integrate persons involved in the BDS campaign.

No university or educational institution is isolated. Israeli institutions are globally connected, and rely on that transnational support in order to carry out the genocidal and colonial project of the Israeli State. These institutions are a part of the Israeli war machine. The agency of the students and workers of the UHH and of other universities in the world determines whether Israel is able to carry on with its acts or not.