

Stop European funding for Israeli institutions

Israel's war on Gaza is causing previously unseen levels of death and destruction amongst the Palestinian people, already suffering from decades of illegal occupation and apartheid. While Palestinian universities are being deliberately annihilated by the Israeli military, Israeli academic institutions continue to enjoy a privileged status as partners of European science, receiving over €2.6 billion in EU research funding since 2007. Israeli universities, far from being stalwarts of “academic freedom”, have been an integral part of the Israeli settler-colonial project since their inception. They produce scholarship that seeks to normalize and legitimize crimes committed by the State of Israel, they develop technology and strategies that are deployed by the Israeli military on Palestinians, and they undermine academic freedom by repressing critical Jewish and Arab voices in their own institutions. Plausible evidence of Israel’s crimes has been found and is being pursued by both international courts (ICC, ICJ) and by the UN, which now considers Israel to be an entity “committing violations against children”. Yet, Israel continues to enjoy access to EU research funding as a privileged “associated country” in Horizon Europe and other programs, and many European institutions are refusing to act to cut these ties.

We therefore demand that

1. **The EU must stop all institutional collaboration with Israeli universities, and revoke Israel's status as a Horizon Europe associated country**
2. **Individual academic freedom and bilateral contacts are preserved with subsidies to individual scholars, with no involvement of Israeli institutions**
3. **The EU takes the lead, with funds, expertise and political support, in reconstructing Palestinian universities and institutions destroyed by Israel**

Since the attacks of October 7, 2023, the suffering of the Palestinian people has reached unimaginable levels, decades into an already violent and oppressive illegal military occupation. Official figures report more than 40,000 Palestinians killed by Israeli offensives in Gaza, the vast majority of whom are civilians, including over 14,000 children. The loss of life is likely to be much bigger, with thousands of bodies still trapped under the rubble, and acute starvation and complete lack of medical care compounding the scale of injury, illness and death. Gaza has been systematically destroyed by Israeli military offensives, leading [the UN to declare Gaza “uninhabitable”](#) already 5 months ago.

Amongst non-European states, Israel receives by far the most European research funding, amounting to [over €2.6 billion](#) since 2007. As detailed below, this includes tens of millions of Euros in the funding of military and defense-related research projects. **We, the undersigned, demand that Israel's status as associated country to Horizon Europe and related EU programs is revoked, effective immediately. Given the scale, duration and nature of human rights violations by the Israeli government, Israeli institutions' participation in European research and education programs must be suspended.** Emphatically, these measures are not aimed at individual Israeli citizens or scholars working in Israel, but rather concern Israeli academic and governmental institutions due to their complicity in grave human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity. We elaborate on this demand below and substantiate the need for urgent European intervention.

Israel's illegal occupation of the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, has enjoyed [decades of impunity](#). However, global and European public opinion, as well as that of international and European institutional actors, has begun to shift. South Africa's genocide case against Israel was [deemed “plausible” by the International Court of Justice \(ICJ\) on January 26, 2024](#). Meanwhile, public uproar has led to unceasing demonstrations and occupations in cities worldwide. May 2024 represented a new

acceleration. On May 20, [the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court \(ICC\) applied for an arrest warrant for the Israeli prime minister and defense minister on the grounds of war crimes and crimes against humanity](#). On May 24, [the ICJ ordered Israel to immediately halt its offensive in Rafah](#), while [more than 200 EU officials expressed their concerns about the EU's lack of response in an open letter](#). On May 27, most governments in the world, including European ones, expressed indignation in response to the bloody attack on Palestinian refugees' tents in Rafah the evening before. A [renewed call on May 31 from the UN](#) affirmed that aid is not being allowed into Gaza, and increasing numbers of children are starving. On June 5, 2024, [the World Food Programme projected that half of Gaza is expected to face death and starvation by mid-July](#). As of June 2024, Slovenia, Spain, Ireland and Norway have officially recognised the state of Palestine. A growing number of European universities have decided to sever or freeze institutional ties with Israel, among them the University of Ghent, Université Libre de Bruxelles, the University of Barcelona and The Royal Academy of Art, The Hague.

The assault on Gaza has specifically targeted public infrastructure such as hospitals, agriculture and institutions of higher education. The term "[scholasticide](#)," coined by the Palestinian scholar Karma Nabulsi from Oxford University, has been used to describe Israel's deliberate and systematic destruction of education, and the annihilation of Palestinian cultural heritage sites. [All Palestinian universities in Gaza and more than 80% of schools have been damaged or destroyed](#). On January 17 2024, Israel [detonated more than 300 mines on the Palestine University of Gaza](#), destroying the last remaining university in Gaza. As of April 2024, [5,479 students, 261 teachers and 95 scientists had already been killed](#). Although the recent intensity of "scholasticide" in Gaza is exceptional, this process started well before October 7, 2023, increasing in intensity since the 2007 economic blockade and escalating military assaults on Gaza. This destruction is a [key component of the ongoing campaign of ethnic cleansing and cultural destruction of Palestine since 1948](#).

Israeli higher education institutions have been deeply integrated into Western academia for decades. However, [recent research by the \(Jewish-Israeli\) anthropologist Maya Wind](#) shows how Israeli universities are not the "liberal bastions of pluralism and democracy" thought of by Western academic and political leaders. On the contrary, Israeli universities have always been active players in the Zionist settler-colonial project expelling Palestinians from their land, and in Israel's system of oppression and apartheid. Since the 1920s, beginning with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Technion University, campuses began to be built on colonised land, which were then used to bolster further waves of occupation and settlement. The latest example is Ariel University, established in the illegal settlement of Ariel in the occupied West Bank. Wind's work details how numerous academic disciplines across **all Israeli universities** work together with the Israeli state, playing both an ideological and material role in what was explicitly recognised as "colonisation" by Israelis until the end of the 1940s. For example, archeological discourse and practice are used to erase memory of Muslim/Arabic history of the region to purport a purely Jewish history of the land of Palestine. Law and criminology scholars stretch the definition of war crimes, repeated violations of international human rights law and the laws of war to label Palestinian civilians as "human shields" and "collateral damage." [The Dahiya doctrine, developed at Tel Aviv University, incites and justifies the use of destructive force on civilian infrastructure](#) (see also [here](#) and [here](#)), one of the rationalisations behind the mounting massacres in Gaza.

Israeli universities form a key part of the fabric of the Israeli military-security establishment and the weapons industry. Multiple universities have military complexes integrated within their campuses, such as Ben-Gurion University, Tel Aviv University and The University of Haifa. These universities seek to ["help their reservist students fulfil their true calling"](#), offering specialised and accelerated degree programs, scholarships and personalised academic tutoring for soldiers. Israeli universities are an inextricable element of the military research and development complex, developing weapons and surveillance technologies to be tested in the occupied Palestinian territories, in close collaboration with all major Israeli weapons manufacturers. Furthermore, Palestinian students are systematically targeted and oppressed within Israeli higher education institutions. As detailed by Maya Wind and others, Palestinian students are admitted to Israeli universities in order to provide a veneer of "diversity," while being systematically

silenced, physically assaulted or detained. As far as it concerns critiquing Israeli government policies, academic freedom does not exist within Israeli universities. Academics and students who speak out against the Israeli system of oppression and its egregious crimes are largely forced into exile or are subject to silencing, censorship, detention and persecution. Not a single university in Israel has spoken up against the grave human rights abuses occurring in Gaza, nor called for a cease-fire, since October 7, 2023.

It is time to answer the call being made by students and scholars worldwide to sever ties with Israeli institutions. Europe has been exceedingly generous with the Israeli academy, bestowing it with recognition and funding. Israel is one of the few non-EU member states that enjoy "associated country" status in Horizon Europe, the EU research funding framework, and amongst non-European states, receives by far the most Horizon funding. This is not an insignificant "academic" matter. Indeed, the European Commission itself "[stressed that the EU-Israel partnership is solid, spanning across various sectors from trade to research and innovation, being the most prominent area of bilateral cooperation thanks to Israel's association to Horizon Europe.](#)" Considerable sums of money have been granted to Israeli universities and institutions through these programs. "[Total funding for Israeli entities under Framework Programme 7 \(2007-2013 – €879 million\), Horizon 2020 \(2014-2020 – €1.28 billion\) and Horizon Europe \(2021-2027 – €503 million until 2023\) adds up to over €2.6 billion.](#)" Currently, there are [more than five hundred Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe-projects](#) involving Israeli institutions.

While the general public perception, also amongst many academics, is that these projects concern pure or objective science, numerous funded projects paint a dramatically different picture. Below are just some examples of active projects receiving European funding (ibid.):

[INHERIT](#) (running until end 2024), developing "counter-terrorism" strategies for "tying perpetrators to crimes, while they are in the preparatory phase". Technion University receives € 522k.

[HERWINGT](#) (running until 2025), for the design of hybrid electric aircrafts, where Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) receives a net EU contribution of € 690k. IAI is one of the major weapon manufacturers in Israel, making numerous devices used in Gaza. They boast on their website of decades of "[combat-proven experience delivering solutions](#)". IAI received [more than € 8.05 million](#) of European funds (via Horizon and other programs) and "[there are well-founded suspicions that the company regularly engages in corruption – including money laundering, bribery and fraud](#)".

[POLIICE](#) (running until 2025), which aims to advance European law enforcement agencies' investigation and intelligence methods in order to effectively investigate crime and terrorism. Two Israeli partners together receive a net EU contribution of € 730k. [In December 2022, the EU froze further adoption of an agreement for data-sharing between Europol and Israeli law enforcement due to human rights concerns in the West Bank.](#) Research, however, has been allowed to continue.

[EU-GLOCTER](#) (running until 2027), develops scientific knowledge and expertise for counter-terrorism. Reichman University received €271k.

[OPTGEN](#) (running until 2028), for optimization of machine learning, where Tel Aviv University is the unique beneficiary of € 1.5 million EU contribution.

The above are just a few examples of currently active projects. Numerous projects which are still running or which have been recently completed are involved in military, law enforcement and defense research and development, for example: **[DiDAX](#)** (€1.5 million to Technion University) **[RESPONDRONE](#)** (€1.4 million to Israeli Aerospace Industries); **[ROXANNE](#)** (€135k to the Israeli Ministry of Public Security); **[LAW-TRAIN](#)** (€ 1.3 million to Bar-Ilan University and €267k to the Israeli Ministry of Public Security); **[MEDEA](#)** (€128k to ZAKA); **[PERCEPTIONS](#)** (€44k to the Israeli Ministry of Public Security); **[TAILOR](#)** (€194 k to Bar-Ilan University).

Israeli beneficiaries of Horizon Europe money extend beyond universities to include Israeli military-industrial complex and security industries, such as companies who have developed AI-assisted and drones

carrying out automated warfare, currently used in the assault on Gaza (e.g. Israel Aerospace Industries: 44 projects for €24,18 million; Xtend Reality Expansion: 1 project for €50k). State bodies receiving funding include the Israeli Ministry of Defense (2 projects, for a total of €238k) and the Ministry of National Security (formerly known as the Ministry of Public Security; 19 projects for a total of €2.14 million). The head of the Ministry of Defense has a pending arrest application to the ICC for war crimes, and the Ministry of National/Public Security is responsible for escalating repression and violence in the West Bank, [through the establishment of special police forces](#) and the release of [more than 100.000 gun licenses](#), mainly to settlers in the West Bank. The extent of both Horizon Europe and other European economic and political support of the Israeli military-security complex has been recently detailed in [an investigative report from the Transnational Institute](#).

It is imperative to note that this funding has been granted despite the Horizon program explicitly forbidding the funding of “dual-use” research with potential military applications. [In actuality, Horizon funding has played a critical role in the advancement of Israeli military technology.](#) With each wave of Horizon funding over the past 2 decades, a new, more deadly and technologically advanced assault has been carried out in Gaza, in [what was termed in 2014 an "incremental genocide"](#). **While the above highlights projects directly related to military and defense activities, recent scholarship has affirmed that every single Israeli institution is complicit in the state apparatus of oppression and war crimes.** Moreover, given the recent ICJ ruling that Israel is committing a plausible genocide in Gaza, the continued funding of Israeli research and development risks rendering the EU both complicit in genocide and in negligence of their legally-bound duty to prevent genocide.

Students and staff in universities across Europe are responding to the call from Palestinian society, including the Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees (PFUUPE), the presidents of 15 Palestinian universities, and all major Palestinian student groups, demanding an end to all institutional ties with Israeli institutions and demanding divestment from companies that are complicit in Israel's gross human rights violations. In several cases (e.g. Norway, Spain, Ireland, UK, Belgium, Netherlands), universities have realised these demands completely or partially. However, in most cases, the vast majority of these collaborations are funded via EU Horizon funds. **We, the undersigned, therefore believe that it is the European Union, as a union of countries and as a funding institution, who must act swiftly and decisively according to its own stated principles and revoke Israel's status as a Horizon Europe associated country.**

Excluding Israel from these and other European research programs *does not prevent European scholars and universities from working with individual Israeli scholars*, as long as the collaboration does not entail any institutional link. We also demand that the EU takes the lead in restoring educational institutions in occupied Gaza, and further support the development of Palestinian universities in the occupied West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. Given the EU's historic funding of the Israeli military apparatus, it must act to safeguard the Palestinian cultural and scientific heritage and provide Palestinian scholars with the support needed to realise their universal human right to education.

Considering that:

- The participation of countries in European research programs is grounded in the demand that participating member states respect and protect human rights, as stated, amongst other places, in [the cooperation agreement between the European Union and Israel](#).
- Israel is in clear breach of not only this association agreement but international law, given its flagrant defiance of both ICJ rulings and UN Security Council resolutions, as well as multiple resolutions of the UN General Assembly.

- Many EU member governments are currently [openly discussing imposing sanctions against Israel](#), and the Horizon program is the most important financial tool in the Israel-EU bilateral relationship.
- The association in Horizon for EU non-member states has traditionally been used as a [bargaining chip](#) in negotiations over diplomatic or commercial matters (for example, with Switzerland and [the post-Brexit UK](#)); participation in Horizon is a diplomatic privilege and cannot be taken “as a given”
- Withdrawal of Horizon funding from Russian and Belarusian institutions was implemented just [8 days](#) after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In the case of Israel, it is often argued by institutional boards that ties cannot be feasibly cut for ongoing projects, and that such cuts would undermine academic freedom. The speed with which the EU cut academic ties to Russian and Belarusian institutions demonstrates both the overwhelming precedent and obvious feasibility of implementing academic boycotts against institutions complicit in gross human rights violations.

We, staff and students of European institutions and supporting cultural organisations, demand:

A stop to institutional collaboration between Israel and the EU

- Israel's status as a Horizon Europe associated country is revoked.
- Host institutions in Israel are no longer able to participate in Horizon Europe-funded collaborative projects, and participation of Israeli institutions in existing projects is suspended.
- Israel's institutional participation in Erasmus+ programs is revoked.

Communication channels with Israeli scholars are maintained

- For early career/PhD researchers involved in these projects based at EU-institutions, incremental measures must be found so that individual scholars can continue their research, as was the case for Russian scholars.
- Funds are made available for individual Israeli (or Israeli-based) scholars for exchange (travel) within the EU, for example allowing Israeli students to participate in Erasmus+ without institutional affiliation.
- A program is started to facilitate Israel-based scholars who wish to relocate to an EU institution, also via existing Horizon Europe schemes (such as ERC, MSCA).
- In no case will this imply the transfer of funds to Israel institutions or the signing of contracts with them.

Palestinian higher education is restored

- A funding and accountability program is made available to help the reconstruction of the Palestinian academic institutions that have been destroyed by Israeli military activities.
- EU institutions are stimulated and funded to establish programs that foster academic studies in Palestine, in support and guidance from [Palestinian-led calls to support the rebuilding of higher education](#).
- The implementation of fellowship programs for Palestinian scholars, including making them eligible for MSCA intra-EU fellowships, ERC grants and Erasmus+ exchange grants.

In making these demands, we reaffirm and align with the calls made to boycott and divest from institutions complicit in the ongoing genocide, including both the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) and Jewish communities world-wide including, but not limited to, Jewish Voice for Peace, Erev Rav, Independent Jewish Voice and the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network. We recognise that an end to the violent and illegal decades-long occupation of the Palestinian territories will create a region that is more safe for **all** ethnic and religious groups in the region. Europe must recognise its historic and ongoing role in the Israeli settler-colonial project and the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, and actively contribute to a more just future for all.