

Conscientious Objection. For Human Rights and Compliance with International Law

We, the undersigned academics and employees of German universities and research institutions, as well as German academics working abroad declare that we conscientiously refuse to cooperate with the state of Israel and Israeli institutions that are complicit in illegal occupation, apartheid, genocide, and other violations of international law.

We declare that we are committed to the following principles in the future:

1. We will not support any cooperation with the state of Israel or with its complicit institutions.
2. We will not support any institutionalized exchange with complicit Israeli institutions, and we will neither promote nor publicly approve any further connections.
3. We will not participate in activities organized or (co)-hosted by the state of Israel or its complicit institutions.

In doing so, we are inspired by the [Uppsala Declaration](#) adopted by more than 2000 colleagues in Sweden. The present version of this declaration was finalized on June 29, 2025 and linguistically edited on July 24, 2025.

We do so for the following reasons:

We, the undersigned academics and employees at German universities and research institutions and German academics working abroad, are appalled by Israel's unbridled annihilation of Palestine and the Palestinian people. The killing, maiming, and starvation of the besieged population of Gaza, the persistent, often fatal attacks on journalists, and also on medical personnel, humanitarian aid workers, UN staff, and rescue workers, the systematic destruction of food and medicine supplies, agriculture, water and energy infrastructure, as well as of all Palestinian universities in Gaza have turned Gaza into a [graveyard for human rights and international law](#). The unlawful Israeli blockade of humanitarian aid since March 2, 2025, punishes, harms, and exterminates the civilian population of Gaza, half of whom are children and young people.

While the death toll continues to rise, Israel's actions in Gaza have been classified as genocide by the [UN Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Violating the Human Rights of the Palestinian People](#) (A/79/363, IX), by high-ranking [UN human rights experts](#), and by numerous human rights organizations, including [Amnesty International](#) and [Human Rights Watch](#). Even among [genocide scholars](#), there is now a consensus that Israel is committing genocide. The International Court of Justice (ICJ), the United Nations' principal judicial body, found in [January 2024](#) that there is a plausible risk that Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinians.

The ICJ successively reaffirmed this assessment in its subsequent provisional measures of [March](#) and [May 2024](#). Within the framework of the provisions of the Genocide Convention, the Court obliged the State of Israel to ensure, among other things, the provision of food, clothing, shelter, hygiene and sanitation supplies as well as medical supplies and medical assistance to the Palestinians.

In July 2024, the [ICJ found](#) that Israel's occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is illegal and violates the right of peoples to self-determination and the prohibition of racial segregation or apartheid. Israel is therefore obligated to withdraw immediately from the Palestinian territory. Third states have a duty to refrain from actions that support Israel's violations. Referring to the ICJ ruling, the [United Nations General Assembly resolved in September 2024](#) that Israel must end its illegal presence in the occupied Palestinian territory within twelve months. UN human rights experts have [affirmed](#) that, in accordance with the ICJ opinion, third states must "cancel or suspend economic relationships, trade agreements and academic relations with Israel that may contribute to its unlawful presence and apartheid regime in the occupied Palestinian territory." States must take measures to prevent their nationals, companies, and entities under their jurisdiction from engaging in activities that support or maintain Israel's occupation ([see paragraph 5 \(a\) of the UN General Assembly resolution of September 2024](#)).

International law recognizes the conduct of public universities as part of the state. Therefore, they, too, must not support the illegal occupation. Recognizing this legal duty, a legal expert opinion published by law scholars at the University of Antwerp in Belgium [concludes](#) that universities and research institutions must meet their legal obligations by ending "all collaborations with [Israeli] academic and other institutions directly or indirectly implicated in the violations of international law."

Scholars have highlighted how closely Israeli universities are intertwined with the Israeli political system and its regime of oppression against the Palestinians, and how they have made their research and resources available to the government and the Israeli military (see for example [Rierner 2023](#), [Wind 2024](#), [Expert Committee on Israeli-Dutch Academic Ties 2025](#)). In doing so, they not only have supported the illegal occupation and apartheid system but also the ongoing genocide.

Therefore, institutional cooperation with these universities amounts to aiding and abetting violations of peremptory international law. The termination of these institutional co-operations until Israeli universities cease to support and participate in the illegal occupation and genocide, is therefore an obligation under international law. In Germany, according to [Article 25 of the Basic Law](#), the general rules of international law – including both the right to self-determination and the prohibition of genocide – are part of federal law and even take precedence over federal laws.

We are witnessing a genocide that is escalating daily. Israel's relentless killing and even targeted murder of students, teachers, researchers, journalists, and cultural workers, as well as its systematic destruction of schools, universities, libraries, archives, cemeteries, cultural monuments, and cultural institutions, has wiped out the entire education and research sector in Gaza. Following [Karma Nabulsi](#), who coined the term in a Guardian report in 2009, UN experts [described](#) Israel's actions in Gaza as "scholasticide" as early as April 2024 (see also [Desai 2024](#), [Tooze 2025](#), [Shlaim 2025](#)). With its systematic destruction of the educational sector and of Gaza's material and immaterial cultural legacy Israel has destroyed not only the Palestinian people's life in the present, but also its cultural memory which is as vital for a community's life as is their material existence.

Israeli universities have played an active role in developing weapons systems and military doctrines to maintain the illegal occupation of Palestine. They justify the unlawful colonization and annexation of occupied territories, rationalize ethnic cleansing and extrajudicial executions of Palestinians, and participate in other explicit violations of human rights and international law. Furthermore, they systematically discriminate against Palestinian students and staff ([Wind 2024](#)). In its [recent report](#), the Israeli organization Academia for Equality shows how critical voices are silenced at Israeli universities and pressure for self-censorship has been increased. Israeli universities are thus complicit in the occupation of Palestine, which the ICJ has deemed illegal. Even in the current genocide, [Israeli universities support their students who are actively serving in the Israeli military, promote military service among international students, and have students develop specialized technology for genocide](#). In December 2024, Israeli military officials, weapons manufacturers, and American venture capitalists met at Tel Aviv University for [the first two-day "DefenseTech Summit."](#) There, they celebrated the new, unfettered era of technomilitarization in panels with topics such as "The Future of Global Conflicts," "The Challenges of Iron Swords" (Israel's term for the genocide and the military operation), and "Exploring Innovations in Drone Technology." Neither individual university administrations and professional societies nor the Israeli Association of University Heads (VERA) have called for a permanent end to the genocide, an end to the illegal occupation, and compliance with applicable international law.

Meanwhile, German academic institutions and the relevant ministries at the state and federal levels insist on maintaining cooperation with Israeli institutions involved in violations of international law. Not only that: they even promote new partnerships and commit to intensifying existing cooperation (e.g., [the German Rectors' Conference](#) and the [Max Planck Society](#)). Students, in cooperation with academic colleagues at various German universities, have identified the institutional connections between German and Israeli universities and published reports. To date, not a single German university has agreed to comply with applicable international law and to have its cooperation with Israeli institutions independently reviewed by experts. Instead, [student protests have been criminalized and repeatedly suppressed with violence](#). The Technical University of Munich went so far as to lead students and staff into a seminar room, where they were locked in by the police and had their details taken. [They were then charged with trespassing](#).

As a historical consequence of the Palestinian and South African solidarity in the struggle against Apartheid, the University of Johannesburg became in 2011 the first international institution to distance itself from an Israeli university. It [terminated](#) an agreement with Ben-Gurion University, citing its involvement in human rights violations, including the theft of Palestinian water. Other universities have since followed South Africa's example, including [five Norwegian universities](#), which severed their ties with complicit institutions in 2024. Likewise, the universities of [Ghent](#), [Tilburg](#), [Amsterdam](#), [Utrecht](#), [Nijmegen](#), [Trinity](#) (Dublin), [Queens](#) (Belfast), [Barcelona](#), among [others](#), have had their collaborations reviewed and have either partially or almost completely suspended and terminated their cooperation with Israeli institutions.

As academics and employees at German universities and research institutions as well as German academics abroad, we can no longer accept participation in collaborations with

Israeli institutions that violate international law. We reaffirm our moral right to conscientiously refuse to participate in activities that fundamentally contradict our principles of academic integrity, including our belief in the equality and dignity of all human beings. We have therefore decided to sever ties with Israeli universities and institutions until they will have ended their complicity with and participation in illegal occupation, racist segregation and genocide.

We explicitly do not call for the severance of relations with individual Israeli academics. Rather, we firmly oppose, as conscientious objection, any cooperation with Israeli institutions complicit in illegal occupation, apartheid, genocide, and other violations of international law.

We are committed to international law and human rights. Therefore, we urge our colleagues and institutions in Germany to act accordingly and sever all cooperation with the state of Israel and Israeli institutions complicit in the occupation of Palestinian territory and the maintenance of the occupation regime. We will continue to exert pressure on our own institutions, within our means, to suspend their academic relationships with complicit Israeli universities and to divest from companies complicit in Israel's gross human rights violations.

You can sign the declaration [here](#).

If you do not have an institutional e-mail address (e.g., people between jobs) or do not wish to use Google Forms, please send an e-mail to uppsaladeclaration_germany@proton.me with the following information:

- First Name (required)
- Last Name (required)
- Academic title
- Department/ Institute
- Name of your university or academic institution (required)
- University website
- Country (if not in Germany)
- Institutional e-mail address (required)
- Consent to receive updates on the initiative

Please clearly state in your email that you wish to sign the declaration. You may also use this address for any questions.