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Black Flag: An Urgent Call to the Heads of Academia in Israel, signed by more than 1400 Israeli academics

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An Urgent Call to the Heads of Academia in Israel

To the Association of University Heads in Israel, the Board of Academic Public Colleges, the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, and Academics for Israeli Democracy

We, members of the academic and administrative staff in institutions of higher education in Israel, call on you to **act immediately** to mobilize the full weight of Israeli academia to stop the Israeli war in Gaza.

Israeli higher education institutions play a central role in the struggle against the judicial overhaul. It is precisely against this backdrop that their silence in the face of the killing, starvation, and destruction in Gaza, and in the face of the complete elimination of the educational system there, its people, and its structures, is so striking.

Since Israel violated the ceasefire on March 18, almost 3,000 people have been killed in Gaza. The vast majority of them were civilians. Since the start of the war, at least 53,000 people have been killed in Gaza, including at least 15,000 children and at least 41 Israeli hostages. At the same time, many international bodies are warning of acute starvation – the result of intentional and openly declared Israeli government policy – as well as of the rendering of Gaza into an area unfit for human habitation. Israel continues to bomb hospitals, schools, and other institutions. Among the war's declared goals, as defined in the orders for the current military operation "Gideon's Chariots," is the "concentration and displacement of the population." **This is a horrifying litany of war crimes and even crimes against humanity, all of our own doing.**

As academics, we recognize our own role in these crimes. It is human societies, not just governments, that commit crimes against humanity. Some do so by means of direct violence. Others do so by sanctioning the crimes and justifying them, before and after the fact, and by keeping quiet and silencing voices in the halls of learning. It is this bond of silence that allows clearly evident crimes to continue unabated without penetrating the barriers of recognition.

We cannot claim that we did not know. We have been silent for too long. For the sake of the lives of innocents and the safety of all the people of this land, Palestinians and Jews; for the sake of the return of the hostages; if we do not call to halt the war immediately, history will not forgive us. We will not forgive ourselves. It is our duty to act to stop the slaughter; it is our duty to save lives. It is our duty to save what can still be saved of this land's future. The institutions of higher education in Israel must raise their voices, address their students and the public at large, look at reality directly and call things what they are – unspeakable actions being done in our name, with our own hands, that will ultimately result in destroying higher education in Israel and the entire society from within.

For the online version of the letter in Hebrew, Arabic, and English with the full list of signatories, click here (English follows Hebrew).

"Black Flag" Action Group

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