



Since the heinous attacks of October 7th, we have witnessed a shocking increase in antisemitism on campuses globally, along with increasing calls to boycott Israeli academic institutions and researchers. In response, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU) has established a team to address these challenges, led by President Daniel Chamovitz, Rector Chaim Hames, and Vice President for Global Engagement Michal Bar-Asher Siegal. This team works regularly with leaders of other Israeli universities.

BGU shares the commitment to peace and justice in the region expressed in the statement by the "Association of University Heads, Israel." We condemn all forms of hatred, including that aimed at Jews or Arabs. Like our public counterparts in North America and Western Europe, BGU operates autonomously in all academic matters. Any attempt to portray us as governmental or military institutions is incorrect.

Founded over half a century ago, BGU is committed to promoting diversity and upholding principles of free expression, including the right to demonstrate on campus. We believe BGU and Israeli academia can serve as vital components in bridging divides, but only through continued partnership and engagement with the global scholarly community.

The attacks of October 7th were devastating for the BGU community, located just 40 kilometers from Gaza. We suffered immense personal losses: Within hours, 75 members of our community were murdered, 8 were kidnapped to Gaza, and over 600 were rendered homeless. The human toll is staggering. Examples include:

Nili Margalit, a nursing faculty member, spent 55 days in captivity, unaware her father had been murdered.

Noa Argamani, a 3rd-year systems engineering student, was kidnapped and rescued after over 250 days in captivity.

Baruch Saar, a 1st-year electrical engineering student, was murdered in captivity weeks after being kidnapped.

Dina Kapitshar, an employee from human resources, was killed along with her husband and two young children.

While we mourn our losses, we also acknowledge the grave suffering experienced by Palestinians caught up in the ensuing war. We must be brave enough to say that the war needs to end, and that each additional day continues to claim the lives of hostages, soldiers, and civilians. Ending the war will not only open the door for the hostages' return, it will also ease the growing humanitarian crisis we see every day on the news. Hamas bears responsibility for much of the civilian suffering. But Israel, has the power to end this war and shape the future.

This future is presented in the values that BGU stands for too:

BGU was founded with the mission of providing affordable, quality education to underserved populations in Israel's Negev desert, including the local Bedouin Arab community. We have always integrated Arab students, faculty, and leaders, and continue to increase representation and foster dialogue through programs like the Shared Life Ambassadors initiative.

For decades, BGU has been actively involved in regional peace and cooperation efforts. Our campus hosted the historic Israel-Egypt peace treaty signing in 1979. Today, our institutes host students from Palestinian territories and other Arab nations for cross-border educational and research opportunities that build bridges amidst conflict.

Our commitment to diversity and inclusion is exemplified by our Vice President for Diversity and Equity, Prof. Sarab Abu Rabia, Israel's first Bedouin female professor. Last September, Prof. Abu Rabia led a delegation of Arab and Jewish BGU students to a U.S. university to conduct seminars on building shared societies. Our campus, where Jews and Arabs continue to live and learn together even in the shadow of recent events, can serve as a model for the difficult but essential discussions on creating a truly shared society.

We believe BGU and Israeli academia can serve as vital components of bridging divides, but only through continued partnership and engagement with the global scholarly community.

We call on academic institutions worldwide to strengthen academic collaborations with Israeli academia, upholding our mutual global aspirations towards a better future together, advancing knowledge and truth-seeking.