

# Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Report for Swedish Universities

Academic boycott  
as an act of justice  
for Palestine



WORKERS AND STUDENTS  
IN SWEDISH ACADEMIA  
FOR PALESTINE



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of justice for Palestine

WASSAP  
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This report was authored by a group of concerned students and workers based in universities across Sweden.

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# Introduction

Workers and Students in Swedish Academia for Palestine (WASSAP) wrote our first report in 2024 in response to the challenge posed by Swedish universities themselves—that if we presented our arguments in a well-researched, academic format, they would listen. Yet they have *not* listened. In fact, university management has not engaged with our findings, and have, for the most part, entirely withdrawn from dialogue. When we organized open meetings at different universities, inviting management representatives for constructive dialogue, we were met with silence, if not hostility.

The first report, published in August 2024 (WASSAP, 2024), aimed at amplifying the call by Palestinian academics and university administrators to their university colleagues around the world to materially help them “resist the ongoing campaign of scholasticide in occupied Palestine” (Gaza Academics and Administrators, 2024, para. 3). The report has been circulated and discussed at events hosted by local staff and students at nearly all public universities in Sweden. Yet the vice chancellors and board members of these universities decided to ignore issues of the ongoing apartheid regime, genocide, and scholasticide, and of their complicity in whitewashing and enabling them. At almost every university, vice chancellors, deans, and even most heads of department declined invitations from their own staff and students, refusing to answer their arguments. At some universities, professors even petitioned their vice chancellors to join an open discussion, but they have refused. When hosting staff workshops on “responsible internationalization,” university administrations fail to address or even mention the glaring issue at hand: the ongoing scholasticide and genocide actively supported—both ideologically and materially—by *our own partner universities*. In effect, university boards continue to impose forced complicity on staff and students, effectively tying them to the decades-old Israeli apartheid regime.

This report particularly situates an academic boycott as an act of justice for Palestine. The justice we invoke is not merely a justice that is granted by those in power when they see fit. Justice, in this case, is changing the conditions under which apartheid, ethnic cleansing, and genocide occur. Justice means to create a world where these atrocities do not exist, where they are seen as unjustified and unjustifiable, not just “a complicated matter” that is allowed to go on through international inaction or generalized indifference and impunity. While this might sound like a lofty ideal, we situate justice as the concrete action that our universities can take to undermine the Israeli violence and apartheid that is supported through their own universities and, by extension, by universities worldwide who decide to collaborate with them. We know that justice is something that must be realized through our collective action and we recognize the small, though not insignificant, role that Swedish universities should play towards this realization.

The official death count in Gaza as a direct result of Israel’s military attacks stands—as of August 17, 2025—at over 61,944 people, with more than 155,886 people injured (AJLabs, 2025). This figure, however, is calculated by experts to be a vast underestimation (Khatib et al., 2024). The reported figures exclude those buried in the rubble and indirect deaths. Statistics from recent conflicts tell us that for every death directly caused by military violence, there are 3 to 15 additional deaths caused by causes such as starvation and lack of access to essential care, such as maternal healthcare (Khatib et al., 2024). Using a *conservative estimate* of 4 additional deaths, the estimated death toll as of June 19, 2024—in other words, as of over a year ago from the publishing of

this report—was 186,000 (Khatib et al., 2024, p. 237). Considering the main weapon Israel has used throughout the genocide has been to destroy all conditions of life in Gaza, indirect deaths would be a figure that go far beyond these estimated figures. As we write, all of Gaza is either on the verge or already undergoing an "entirely man-made" famine (Integrate Food Security Phase Classification [IPC], 2025, pp. 2–3). The famine is "deliberately engineered and perpetuated by Israel" (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], 2025b, para. 8), especially since it imposed a total aid blockade on the Palestinians in March 2025. Israel has replaced the UN aid distribution system with a militarized, purposefully inefficient and cruel system, which has been denounced by the UN, Oxfam International, and over 240 international NGOs (Oxfam International, 2025; UN, 2025). More than 1,000 Palestinian civilians have been killed and thousands more have been injured by the Israeli military while seeking aid as of July 2025 (UN, 2025) in this 'aid distribution scheme', which has been deemed "a sadistic death-trap" (UN, 2025) aimed at forcing Palestinians to choose between "starvation or gunfire" (Oxfam International, 2025). Multiple human rights organizations, as well as most genocide experts worldwide, have now concluded that Israel is deliberately committing genocide against the Palestinian people (Amnesty International, 2025; Human Rights Watch, 2024; International Association of Genocide Scholars, 2025). In addition to the Israeli onslaught in Gaza, the regime has launched brutal attacks in Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Tunisia, Iran, and Qatar since 2023.

A contradiction at the heart of liberal academia has acutely surfaced: the tension between the production of sound knowledge and the imperative of public authorities to forward state economic and military interests. The systematic refusal of vice chancellors and university boards to engage with arguments grounded in international law and their own research ethics policies undermines trust, academic freedom, and the very integrity of open debate and academic freedom. Especially troubling is their refusal to engage with the arguments of their own students—particularly when the International Court of Justice (ICJ, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c) has already determined that Israel's policies can be classified as apartheid and has ordered all states and public institutions to take every possible measure to prevent violations of Palestinians' rights as safeguarded by the Genocide Convention. This responsibility extends to public authorities, including universities. However, the Swedish government has decided that "national security interests" should override respect for what little integrity international law still affords, and Swedish universities have followed suit (WASSAP, 2024). When the state disregards peremptory norms of international law, universities must step up and exercise their autonomy and academic freedom.

For the past two years, Swedish universities themselves have consistently argued that they cannot make any statement against Israel's illegal military actions—especially regarding the eradication of educational infrastructure and access to study—because their position is synonymous with that of the Swedish state (WASSAP, 2024). When asked why the same ethical principles that led Swedish universities to take a clear and immediate stance when Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 (by severing ties with Russian institutions and offering support to Ukrainian academics and students) could not be applied to the case of Palestine, university spokespeople claimed that the situation was different—the Swedish government opposed the Russian invasion of

Ukraine, but did not oppose Israel's assault on Palestine. The familiar response we and other pro-Palestine student and faculty groups have received to our requests for a denunciation of Israel's destruction of universities in Gaza is that, because Swedish universities are funded and owned by the state, their position is equivalent to that of the government. In other words, it was never a matter of ethical principles, but of compliance with the government designation of "good" and "bad" actors. This is all the more ironic given Swedish universities' insistence on them not being "political", and on their insistence that staff and students in the same way should refrain from being "political", that is to say, from standing up for justice and the self-determination of the Palestinian people. In actuality—and in institutions of higher learning, this should normally go without saying—basing academic collaborations on who the current government approves or disapproves of *is* political. More concerning, Swedish universities are *not* forced to do this by law, but have willingly relinquished their legally protected autonomy in matters concerning their international collaborations. Refraining from being political, if at all possible, would mean applying ethical principles and peremptory norms of international law *consistently*, regardless of the actor and their relation to the Swedish state.

Swedish universities have, thus far, forfeited their ethical responsibility according to what little dignity and justice peremptory norms of international law still provide, and instead have complied with the current wishes or "security interests" of the Swedish state. Because of this, censorship at Swedish universities has been a significant obstacle for students and staff advocating for basic human rights and international law concerning Palestine. Posters and informational materials about events and seminars related to Palestine have repeatedly been removed. Activism within university spaces has effectively been prohibited, and the presence of police and security guards has increased since students set up camps outside their universities and gathered to exercise democratic rights and freedom to peaceful assembly. In some cases (such as at the University of Gothenburg), individuals wearing a keffiyeh have reportedly been denied entry to the main building or been confronted by security guards. Many students and staff at Swedish universities have encountered what can be called structural silence, which not only suppresses discussion and critical thinking within academic spaces, but also allows ongoing atrocities to go unchallenged. Those who have mobilized for Palestine have faced dismissal, skepticism, racism, accusations of antisemitism, and, in some cases, even death threats. Despite this, the struggle to raise awareness persists. The consistent repression of Palestinian solidarity—through censorship and control—is a political act that restricts freedom of speech, academic freedom, and fundamental democratic rights. This makes the structural silence inherently violent—it results in the removal of Palestine from conversation and societal recognition, while the social and material conditions necessary for life are being systematically destroyed.

In this report, we appeal to peremptory norms of international law that inform the ethical frameworks of Swedish universities themselves. However, international law is the result of the actions of states, and its norms change with these actions and with those of broader civil society. We need to remember, for instance, that the crime of apartheid did not exist until the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, with the support of a global movement. Similarly, the particular structure of the decades-old violence against the Palestinian people might give rise to the international crime of *Nakba* (Eghbariah, 2024).



Legal norms change with time, and often to the disadvantage of social justice and peace. While the Israeli crimes of apartheid and genocide have not moved Swedish universities into action, legal abstractions such as *objectivity* and *neutrality* have been weaponized to silence dissenting voices in Swedish academia and broader civil society. In our previous analysis of vice chancellors' responses (see WASSAP, 2024) and of data on academic repression, we have found a worrying trend in which the *apolitical* and the *neutral* are made to signify any position that does not trouble the security interests of the complicit Swedish state (WASSAP, 2025).

Indeed, the Swedish state has, for now, taken a clear stance in line with the United States and Israeli imperialist interests. As we show in this report, Swedish universities have framed the genocide, politically and legally, in line with the Swedish state. However, public institutions and broader civil society do not have to take this same stance. Safeguarding the dignity of the Palestinian right to self-determination and of return, as well as that of all human life - in the face of genocide - demands that unions, university boards, municipalities, and other actors and organizations within Sweden take clear and decisive action against the apartheid and settler-colonial regime. We still believe Swedish universities can follow the lead of bold institutions in Norway, Spain, and beyond by boycotting Israeli apartheid universities and standing up for the inalienable Palestinian right of self-determination and return.

Following our report in 2024, this edition includes updates regarding university collaborations, as well as the complicity of relevant Israeli institutions of higher education. Where the previous report focused on legal and ethical standards and how Swedish universities defended their decisions to break these standards, undermining the principles of academic freedom and autonomy, this report insists not only on broken principles but precisely on *justice*. We emphasize that if Swedish universities refuse to act on this universal moral principle and do not at least abide by the minimum standards set by international legal norms, they will not only be complicit in the continuation of the illegal occupation of Palestine, apartheid, and genocide, but in effectively contributing to not only normalizing them but rendering them legal.

As such, in section 1, we describe the beginnings of WASSAP, who we are, and elaborate on the call to boycott. We also give examples of academic boycott successes.

Section 2 provides a historical overview. It outlines the early history of the Zionist movement and its inherent ties to the ultimate dispossession of the Palestinian people, the imposition of an anti-democratic apartheid regime in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and the crucial role that Israeli universities have, from their very foundation, had in the legitimation and execution of this illegal occupation, apartheid, and destruction of Palestinian life.

Following this, Section 3 details the ways in which Israeli universities are critical instruments in the current genocide and oppression of Palestinians, and details the ties between Swedish and Israeli universities. Next, we present our attempts to start collaborations between Swedish and Palestinian universities. Finally, we briefly detail some of the repression faced by pro-Palestine student groups at the hands of Swedish universities.

Section 4 provides an account—historical and doctrinal—of the ambivalent role that international law has played in relation to the repeated dispossession of the Palestinian people: on the one hand, international law has enabled and facilitated this injustice against Palestinians; on the other, certain international legal norms, such as those of the Genocide Convention, clearly mandate that Member States and all governmental institutions within them act to prevent and stop what are clearly crimes of apartheid and genocide committed by Israel against the Palestinian people.

Finally, section 5 of the report elaborates on BDS and why academic boycott is the course of action that must be taken by those who work for justice at and beyond the university, with practical examples on how to pursue them in practice through BDS actions.

Given all this, and building on the demands from our previous report, we now demand that Swedish universities end their complicity in the Israeli apartheid regime, scholasticide, and genocide, and stand for justice by fulfilling these *inseparable* demands:

1. Ending all formal collaborations with Israeli universities and other complicit institutions, in accordance with the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI, 2014) guidelines;
2. Establishing collaborations with Palestinian universities, including providing meaningful support to displaced Palestinian academics and students, offering them a place to study and work at Swedish universities;
3. Upholding the freedoms of assembly and speech for academic workers and students, with special attention to discussions related to Palestine. Opposing the systemic censoring and underfunding of pro-Palestine groups both in academia and in general.

# Section 1:

## Who we are and the call for boycott

## 1.1 The beginnings of WASSAP

WASSAP (Workers and Students in Swedish Academia for Palestine) was established in October 2023 in response to the latest phase of Israel's occupation of Palestine. Founded by PhD candidates across Swedish universities, it was soon joined by students and staff. Alongside the broader student movement in solidarity with Palestine, WASSAP began demanding that Swedish universities take a position against the unimaginably destructive military campaign in Gaza that has killed tens of thousands and eradicated the entire educational infrastructure of the occupied territory, which has been under military blockade since 2007. We also appealed to universities to offer support to dispossessed Palestinian academics and students, as has been offered to Ukrainian academics since Russia's invasion in February 2022, through scholarships, research visits, collaborations, and other forms of support.

Despite the refusal of universities to listen to the network's demands, we have continued to invite students, academics, university staff, and the general public into conversations about colonization, genocide, and racism. At campuses all over Sweden, we have set up reading groups, open lectures, poetry readings, protests, marches, food and goods exchanges, support services, petitions, and campaigns for the end of colonization, genocide, and scholasticide. In most cases, we have done so alongside other local organizations that stand in solidarity with Palestine, including fellow university staff and students. The immense and tireless work of these other organizations across Swedish universities has both directly and indirectly added to this report.

## 1.2 The call to 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 academic boycott of Israeli universities and institutions does not seek to boycott individual researchers. Rather, it seeks to hold Israeli academic institutions that actively support the ongoing oppression and occupation of Palestinians perpetrated by the Israeli state and army accountable. In alignment with the guidelines for the academic boycott of Israel founded in 2004 by the international Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), the boycott does not target individual researchers who are affiliated with Israeli academic institutions. The boycott is instead directed towards Israeli academic institutions themselves (PACBI, 2014). The boycott of academic institutions in Israel also follows the definition of academic freedom adopted by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR, 1999; see also Scholars at Risk, 2023).

While the PACBI boycott does not target individual academics, it does advocate for a "common sense" boycott. Common sense boycotts mean:

that conscientious citizens around the world may call for in response to what they widely perceive as egregious individual complicity in,

responsibility for, or advocacy of violations of international law (such as war crimes or other grave human rights violations), racial violence, or racial slurs. (PACBI, 2014, para. 6)

This applies regardless of country of origin or current residence (BDS Movement, n.d.). Therefore, individual academics whose research partakes in the oppression of Palestinians should be boycotted, regardless of whether they are Israeli, Swedish, or of any other nationality, and regardless of the institution where they are employed.

During apartheid in South Africa, boycott and sanction 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, boycott and sanction campaigns drastically diminished the possibility of apartheid authorities finding international support (McGreal, 2021). A similar international campaign for boycotting Russia has resulted in its removal from all international cultural events, severely jeopardizing its internal propaganda and contributing to mounting disappointment among Russians with their corrupt governing regime (Casey, 2024; Serhan, 2022; Yale Chief Executive Leadership Institute, 2024).

Following the unanimous position of critical academic research (Bertov, 2024; Butler, 2023, 2024; Fields, 2020; Haugbølle, 2024; Loewenstein, 2023; Makdisi, 2024; Stop Wapenhandel et al., n.d.) and humanitarian organizations (Al-Haq, 2022; Amnesty International, 2022a; 2024a; B'Tselem, 2021; 2025; Human Rights Watch, 2021; 2024; United Nations [UN], 2022; Yesh Din, 2020), the BDS movement today maintains that Israel is an apartheid state that is currently committing genocide in Gaza. On July 19, 2024, the International Court of Justice found that Israel's prolonged and illegal military occupation of Palestinian territories violated international law, including the Palestinian rights under the prohibition of apartheid (ICJ, 2024c). In his declaration, the president of the ICJ expanded on the court's position that Israeli discriminatory policies and practices are tantamount to apartheid (Salam, 2024). This is the first time since 2004 that the ICJ has made such a clear ruling on Israel's illegal occupation, and confirms the illegality of Israel's occupation and siege of Palestine, which has been extensively documented by multiple international organizations and human rights groups for decades (Amnesty International, 2022a, 2024a; Human Rights Watch, 2021, 2024; United Nations Division for Palestinian Rights, 2023). Israel has created and maintained the conditions of apartheid and illegal occupation for decades. As we will develop in this report, it has also become undeniable that Israel is currently committing a genocide against the Palestinian population. The call for a boycott of all complicit institutions in these crimes is thus a legal, ethical, and moral responsibility for all.

To explicate this point, we outline the historical context for the Nakba, the imposition of an anti-democratic apartheid regime, the crime of genocide committed against Palestinians, and the role Israeli universities have played and continue to play in maintaining these crimes. Before turning to the remaining sections, we offer examples of current academic BDS successes.

### 1.3 Academic BDS successes

Many student and academic-led movements throughout the world have successfully petitioned their universities to boycott Israeli universities in accordance with the PACBI guidelines. These successes demonstrate that academic boycott is not an unrealistic goal, but rather a necessary one to ensure justice and freedom for Palestinians. BDS and PACBI have been regularly updating a webpage with all these successes (PACBI, 2024). In neighboring Norway, 5 universities have suspended ties with Israeli universities, while in Finland, the University of Helsinki suspended exchange agreements with Israeli universities. Other universities that suspended ties include 76 universities in Spain, the University of the Western Cape, the University of South Africa, the Senate of the University of Venda in South Africa, and many others around the world.

Furthermore, many student councils and unions have demanded that their universities suspend collaborations with complicit Israeli universities, including at Stockholm University, the University of Gothenburg, and Uppsala University. Unfortunately, none of these universities have heeded the demands of their students and staff. Instead, they continue to restrict their student and staff's right to protest, and portray their own students and staff as security threats.

Additionally, the Swedish Association of Anthropologists (SANT) passed a resolution in its annual meeting on 11 April 2025, endorsing a call to boycott Israeli academic institutions until these institutions end their complicity in violating Palestinian rights, urging its members to advocate for this measure at their departments and universities. The resolution also encouraged its members to build ties with Palestinian universities and colleagues to promote the development of anthropology as an independent and free discipline.

The Uppsala Declaration of Conscientious Objection (Faculty and Staff in Swedish Higher Education and Research, 2025) was launched May 8, 2025, with the first batch of signatories released May 15, 2025. The signatories come from all of Swedish academia and commit to the following three principles:

1. We will not contribute to any collaborations with complicit Israeli institutions, and we will not publicise, promote, or encourage such collaborations;
2. We will not contribute to any exchanges of students and/or staff with complicit Israeli institutions, and we will not publicise, promote, or encourage such exchanges;
3. We will not participate in any activities organised and/or hosted by complicit Israeli institutions, whether they organise and/or host them alone or in collaboration with other institutions, and we will not publicise, promote or encourage participation in such activities.

Since universities in Sweden have failed their students and staff, individual academics have taken their own initiative to enforce the academic boycott. As of the writing of this report, over 2,300 academics across Sweden have signed the declaration.

Some universities have shown a shift in position regarding their approach to Palestine. Uppsala University Board released a statement (Ramberg & Hagfeldt, 2025, para. 11) calling on the Swedish government "to explicitly condemn Israel's actions, to immediately resume its funding of UNRWA, and to actively work within the EU to take all available measures (including imposing trade sanctions against Israel) to prevent a genocide in Gaza". Lund University announced it was initiating collaborations with two Palestinian universities, Birzeit University and Arab American University (Andersson, 2025). University of Gothenburg announced "a structured cooperation with Palestinian universities to help students in Gaza through distance learning" (Wallin, 2025, para. 1). Södertörn University is also joining. Unfortunately, missing from all of these initiatives is an academic boycott. In its statement, Uppsala University explicitly rejected the academic boycott (Ramberg & Hagfeldt, 2025). It is not sufficient to provide aid to Palestinian universities and students while continuing to collaborate with the institutions that bomb and destroy them.

Encouragingly, students, academics, and teachers from Konstfack in Stockholm successfully pressured the administration to end their agreement with Bezalel Academy of Art and Design. The agreement ends at the end of 2025 and will not be renewed.

These successes are the hard-won result of unrelenting efforts by academic and university staff, students, and larger civil society, acting in solidarity with Palestinians and human rights everywhere. However, their scale is still insufficient to the magnitude of the ongoing genocide and destruction in Gaza. As such, our fight for justice must continue.





# Section 2:

## Historical overview

## 2.1 The Nakba: continuous destruction of all Palestinian infrastructure and life

### 2.1.a Early history of modern Zionism

The Nakba, or “the Catastrophe”, refers to the ongoing displacement and dispossession of Palestinians from historic Palestine. In this section, we present an overview of how the Zionist project was brought to Palestine and resulted in the Nakba. This violent process severely escalated from 1948 and continued as the structural denial of Palestinian self-determination through military occupation, mass incarceration, and the explicit ideology of Jewish supremacy (Eghbariah, 2024).

The origin of Israel’s founding dates back to the beginning of the Zionist movement in 1897 with the first Zionist congress (Kayyali, 1977). Theodore Herzl conceived modern Zionism in response to rising antisemitism in Europe (Kayyali, 1977). However, it became a settler colonial movement that sought to establish a Jewish-majority state (Kayyali, 1977). Initially, the location of the state was not decided and was fiercely debated among Zionists. Among the countries considered for colonization were Uganda, Argentina, Cyprus, Iraq, Mozambique, the Sinai, and Palestine (Rovner, 2014). Before 1917, Zionism was backed mainly by individual donors, who donated money to buy land and establish settlements in Palestine (Shilo, 1994). Among such settlements is Tel Aviv, which was founded in 1909 in sand dunes north of the Palestinian city of Jaffa (Azaryahu & Troen, 2012). The Zionist movement led by its visionary Herzl was predated by the Christian Zionist idea of “‘Jewish restoration’ to Palestine” (Dingle, 2025, p. 100) and Napoleon’s colonial vision (Peddada, 2025) that would influence later British politics as further described below.

However, the Zionist project is unlikely to have succeeded had it not been aligned with the interests of the imperial powers—particularly Britain and France—in the region. Having divided Africa into colonial possessions during the Berlin congress in 1885 and having concluded that the Ottoman Empire would not survive World War I (WWI), the European imperial powers staked out their desired “spheres of influence” in the region during WWI, through the conclusion of the Sykes-Picot agreement between Britain and France with the knowledge and approval of Russia (UN, 1978; Thomas, 2025). According to the agreement, Britain would be entitled to control Iraq, Palestine, and Kuwait, while France would control Syria, Lebanon, and southern Turkey (Thomas, 2025). While ultimately the secret Sykes-Picot agreement was not followed through after the Soviet government disclosed its terms following the revolution in Russia, Britain and France managed to obtain control over their desired spheres of influence through the League of Nations mandate system (League of Nations, 1919, art. 22).

On November 2, 1917, Zionism found a sponsor and supporter in the form of the most powerful empire on the planet at the time, the British Empire, which issued the Balfour declaration to announce its support for a “national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine (Winder, n.d.a). At the time, Palestinian Arabs constituted 90% of the population of Palestine (Courbage, n.d., para. 3), but were reduced in the declaration to “existing non-Jewish communities” (Winder, n.d.a, para. 3). By September 1918, the British Empire had successfully captured Palestine from the Ottoman Empire, gaining control of the region where Zionism was to be realized (Osborne, 2023). Crucially, whereas under Art. 22 of the *Covenant of the League of Nations* (League of Nations, 1919), the goal of the

mandate was for the mandatory territories to achieve self-rule, the *Mandate for Palestine* was exceptional insofar as the British empire undertook, through the performance of the mandate, to “secure the establishment of the Jewish national home” (League of Nations, 1922).

In issuing the Balfour declaration, the British Empire was partly motivated by antisemitic reasons (Cronin, 2017): Figures in the British Empire’s administration believed antisemitic conspiracy theories about so-called “Jewish influence,” and that supporting the Zionist movement would help Britain win the Great War (Cronin, 2017). Thus, the British Empire was not motivated by providing a safe place for Jewish people to escape to. Balfour himself was an antisemite who, in his role as Prime Minister in 1905, pushed for stricter immigration laws to prevent Jewish refugees fleeing from pogroms throughout the Russian Empire from entering Britain (Cronin, 2017). The British Empire was also motivated by its own imperial goals. One of its key military objectives in 1917 was to ensure “continuity of territory or of control both in East Africa and between Egypt and India” (Cronin, 2017). At the time, the British Empire controlled the Suez Canal, one of the most important shipping lanes. The Suez Canal allowed the British Empire to easily ship to and from India, at the time under British colonialism and the empire’s most significant “possession”, and to its other colonies. Palestine is close to the canal, which made control of Palestine central to the logistics of imperial extraction (Cronin, 2017). This was illustrated clearly in 1956, when Egypt’s nationalization of the Suez Canal prompted an invasion by Israel, Britain, and France.

For Zionism to be realized, however, it needed more settlers, mainly as Palestinian Arabs remained a significant majority (90%) of the population (Hagopian & Zahlan, 1974). The British Empire facilitated the settlement of Jewish people from Europe in Palestine. While a few were motivated by ideological support for Zionism, most immigrated to Palestine for economic reasons, as it was more affordable than immigrating to the United States (Alroey, 2014). Rising antisemitism in Europe during the first half of the 20th century, tragically culminating in the Holocaust, meant that many European Jewish people needed a place of refuge, and immigrated to any place that would take them. Jewish immigration into Palestine during the British period was so significant that, by 1947, 32% of the population of Palestine was Jewish (United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), 1947), while it had been just 11% in 1922 (Barron, 1922).

Ze’ev Jabotinsky, a founder of the Revisionist Zionist movement, said in an essay titled *The Iron Wall* (1923) that “it is utterly impossible to obtain the voluntary consent of the Palestine Arabs for converting ‘Palestine’ from an Arab country into a country with a Jewish majority” (Jabotinsky, 1923). He was adamant about providing a unilateral justification of the Zionist project. “The native populations, civilised or uncivilised, have always stubbornly resisted the colonists, irrespective of whether they were civilised or savage,” he continued (Jabotinsky, 1923). This documents the early Zionists’ admission that in order for the Zionist project to take place, the Palestinian people must be expelled to create a Jewish-majority ethno-state.

A letter written in 1899 from Yusuf Diya al-Khalidi, a Palestinian politician, to Theodore Herzl, urged him to remember that “Palestine is an integral part of the Ottoman Empire, and more gravely, it is inhabited by others [than only Jewish Israelites],” so that “it was ‘pure folly’ to push for the realisation of the Zionist

project in Palestine, as the 'brutal force of circumstances had to be taken into account'" (R. Khalidi, 2020, p. 12). Theodore Herzl responded in a letter to Diya al-Khalidi by stating: "You see another difficulty, Excellency, in the existence of the non-Jewish population in Palestine. But who would think of sending them away?" (R. Khalidi, 2020, p. 13; see also W. Khalidi, 1971, p. 92). Yet this was precisely what the Zionist movement did when it expelled hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in 1948, as we detail later.

Interestingly, Herzl wrote the following four years earlier:

We must expropriate gently the private property on the estates assigned to us. We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it employment in our own country. (Herzl, 1960, pp. 88–89)

This shows that Herzl was fully aware of the consequences his settler colonial project would have on the indigenous population, intentionally misleading Palestinians such as Yusuf Diya al-Khalidi.

Long before the Nakba, Palestinians mounted significant resistance to Zionism and the Zionist movement's settler colonial project. This resistance has existed almost as early as Zionism. For example, Palestinian resistance included publishing popular anti-Zionist newspapers, such as *Al-Karmil*, established in December 1908, and *Filastin*, established in 1911 (R. Khalidi, 1997). From 1936 to 1939, Palestinians participated in the Palestinian revolt. The goals of the revolt were threefold (Kanafani, 1980): An immediate stop to Jewish immigration, the prohibition of the transfer of the ownership of Palestinian Arab lands to Jewish settlers, and the establishment of a democratic government in which Palestinian Arabs would have the largest share, in conformity with their numerical majority.

In October 1935, Palestinian dock workers discovered barrels containing ammunition and guns for the Zionist movement (Cronin, 2017). The British Empire, however, did not make any arrests, showcasing the level of collaboration between the Empire and the Zionist movement (Cronin, 2017). In fact, Chaim Weizmann, future president of Israel, praised the British High Commissioners for allowing the Zionist movement to smuggle arms (Cronin, 2017). The British Empire, meanwhile, violently suppressed the Palestinian revolt. It established concentration camps to detain Palestinians and used collective punishments in some cities, the first of which were Nazareth, Safed, and Beisan (Cronin, 2017). In Jaffa, it destroyed 280 houses, leaving around 500 families homeless (Cronin, 2017). The level of violence and oppression was so severe that ten percent of Palestine's Arab male population between 20 and 60 was killed, wounded, imprisoned or exiled (R. Khalidi, 2007). Because of the British violence, the Palestinian resistance was unable to further safeguard Palestinian life and land during the period leading up to and during the Nakba.

#### 2.1.b The UN plan to dispossess Palestinians and the violent imposition of the Israeli state in historic Palestine

On May 15, 1947, UNSCOP was created at the request of the United Kingdom, after the British government deferred the problem of Palestine onto the United

Nations, following significant resistance against their occupation from both Palestinians and Zionists (Winder, n.d.b). UNSCOP drafted a partition plan for Palestine to divide it into two states, a Jewish state on 56% of the land, an Arab state on 43%, and an international zone (containing the holy cities of Jerusalem and Bethlehem) on roughly 1% of the land. Palestinian delegates rejected the plan, as Palestinians owned most of the land, were the majority, were against the division of their homeland, and against a settler-colonial movement precipitated on their dispossession. Following the plan's announcement, a full-scale war erupted between Zionists and Palestinians. Following months of civil war and a substantial ethnic cleansing campaign by Zionist forces, and with the end of the British mandate approaching (May 15, 1948), Israel issued its declaration of independence on May 14, 1948 (R. Khalidi, 2020). The ethnic cleansing committed by Zionist forces against Palestinians, the destruction of Palestinian locales and the occupation of land is known as the Nakba.

The Haganah was the biggest underground Zionist militia, which was formed in 1920 by Vladimir Jabotinsky and had its headquarters in the Red House in Tel al-Rabi (Tel Aviv) (see Pappé, 2006, pp. xi–xii). Following the creation of the State of Israel, they became the core force integrated into the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). The armed militia group executed a series of armed attacks, bombings, and arson in Palestinian villages. These actions were not isolated:

[T]he actions of the Haganah were part of a master plan ... The plan was executed because the soldiers in the battlefield were oriented by a general attitude from above and motivated by remarks made by the Yishuv's leaders on the need to 'clean' the country. (Pappé, 2006, p. 130)

In the Nakba, the Haganah and other Zionist militias expelled and prevented the return of 750,000 Palestinians (R. Khalidi, 2020), roughly half the Palestinian people at the time. They did so through a campaign of destruction in which they ethnically cleansed 418 Palestinian villages and 11 towns and cities of their Palestinian inhabitants (W. Khalidi, 1992). Furthermore, they occupied 78% of Palestine, well beyond even the areas allocated in the partition plan. To this day, the vast majority of the descendants of the Palestinians expelled in 1948 are unable to return to Palestine, despite the right of return being stipulated in international law, and live in exile, mainly in the neighbouring countries of Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt, or in areas of Palestine not occupied by Zionists at the time, specifically the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (al-Azza et al., 2022). Within the new borders of the newly established State of Israel, 80% of the Palestinians previously living within these borders were expelled, and only 20% remained (Morris, 1987). Those 20% constitute Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, a quarter of whom were internally displaced in 1948, being expelled from and losing their homes, but remaining within the borders of Israel.

A common misconception is that the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians during the Nakba is a result of the intervention of Arab armies (which intervened on May 15, 1948 following the end of the mandate). In fact, over 300,000 out of the 750,000 Palestinians expelled were expelled prior to the entry of the neighboring Arab countries (R. Khalidi, 2020). These ethnic cleansing campaigns happened under British rule, and therefore, the British occupation authorities failed in their obligation to safeguard the Palestinian Arab inhabitants of Palestine during this key stage. The plan to ethnically cleanse Palestinians, called Plan Dalet, was adopted and implemented from March 10, 1948 (Pappé, 2007). Preparations for the ethnic cleansing had been ongoing for much longer.

For example, Plan Dalet relied on the village files, a mapping of all Palestinian villages undertaken in the 1930s and 1940s by the JNF (Jewish National Fund) (Pappé, 2007). In addition to demographic and topographic data about the villages, these files contained “lists of leaders, activists, ‘potential human targets’, the precise layout of villages, and so on” (Pappé, 2007, p. 47). This information would become instrumental in executing Plan Dalet.

The Nakba completely transformed the cities and villages of Palestine. For example, the Palestinian city of Safad was completely emptied of Palestinians, while the Palestinian city of Gaza received a huge influx of refugees, to the point that refugees form the majority of the population of the Gaza Strip.

### 2.1.c US-imperialist support for Zionism

While the initial success of the Zionist movement in Palestine was due to the support of the British Empire, several transformations in the global political economy and geopolitics following World War II prompted the rise of the United States to dominance in the Middle East (Hanieh et al., 2025). Additionally, the Federal Republic of Germany played an important role in supporting the newly founded Israeli state financially (from 1952 onward) and militarily (from 1956 onward), trying to whitewash its crimes in the Holocaust (Marwecki, 2020). The United States’ hegemony, whereby it came to substitute Britain, was coupled with another central development, which made the Middle East crucial in the circuits of global capital accumulation—the transition to oil as the principal energy source (Hanieh, 2024). Establishing control over the Middle Eastern networks of oil production was of utmost importance for the United States to preserve its primacy as the capitalist hegemony, particularly in the context of the Cold War, where the USSR was actively supporting the nationalist movements and governments in the region, including Nasser’s government in Egypt (Hanieh et al., 2025). With almost 40% of the world’s confirmed oil reserves located in the Middle Eastern Gulf monarchies, a strong alliance with these monarchies was the strategic priority of the United States in the region. It is in this context that the United States’ unyielding support of Israel should be analyzed. At stake is not only oil production, refinement, and distribution; the sovereign wealth funds of the Gulf states, accumulated through oil extraction, have become a crucial factor in global financial flows (Patnaik & Patnaik, 2021). Given the *de facto* role of the US dollar as the dominant currency following World War II, both the oil trade, which is denominated in US dollars, and the dollar-dominated global financial flows, further entrenched the importance of the Middle East for the United States’ economic and geopolitical interests (Hanieh, 2024).

Demonstrating the Israeli state’s military prowess through its victory in 1967, in the course of which it occupied the West Bank, Syrian Golan Heights, and the Sinai peninsula, prompted the pivot of the United States towards Israel (Hanieh et al., 2025). Thus, the consistent political backing of, as well as unending flows of military equipment and financing to Israel by the United States, is not only the outcome of Israeli lobbying; instead, it is the result of the imperial interests of the United States in the region. In exchange for the patronage of the United States, “Israel serves as a loyal partner and safeguard against any threats to American interests in the region” (Hanieh et al., 2025, p. 28).



Israel's character as a settler-colonial state plays an important role in this dynamic. Settler-colonial states are by definition based on the oppression of indigenous communities, so that a substantial part of the settler society sees the continuous militarization and high levels of violence as central to its own interests (Hanieh et al., 2025). The settler state's ability to perpetuate racialized oppression often hinges on external support, which prompts the settler population to see its own interests as aligned with those of such external force—the United States in the case of Israel (Hanieh et al., 2025). This situation is to be contrasted with a “normal” client state, such as Egypt and Jordan in the case of the Middle East, where governments are forced to mediate between popular democratic pressures from below and the interests of the patron state, the two being rarely aligned (Hanieh et al., 2025).

## 2.2 Imposition of an anti-democratic apartheid regime

### 2.2.a “Fragmentation into domains of control”: A single space for Jewish citizens, a “fragmented mosaic” restricting rights for Palestinians

Israel's method of governance of the Palestinian population entails that Palestinians are subject to different sets of restrictions, rights, and modes of governance depending on where they live, a division of space that is only relevant for Palestinians. As Amnesty International (2022b) argues, Israel has sought the “fragmentation [of the territory] into domains of control”: “[A]t the heart of the system is keeping Palestinians separated from each other into distinct territorial, legal and administrative domains” (para. 2). As such, “the geographic space, which is contiguous for Jews, is a fragmented mosaic for Palestinians” (B'Tselem, 2021, para. 7).

Palestinians living on land defined in 1948 as Israeli sovereign territory were given Israeli citizenship; however, as the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem (2021) points out, they do not, despite this status, enjoy the same rights as Jewish Israeli citizens, either by practice or law. Palestinians with Israeli citizenship were under martial law from 1948 to 1966 (Barghouti, 2025). Under its civil law, Israel defines Jewish Israelis as “national citizens”, while designating Palestinians as “citizens of Israel” (Amnesty International, 2022a, p. 82). Meaning, Palestinians are not national citizens and, as a result, have inferior rights and privileges in the eyes of Israeli law.

Palestinians in East Jerusalem are defined as “permanent residents of Israel”—a status that exempts them from needing special permits to live and work in Israel, and allows them to receive health insurance and social benefits, as well as to vote in municipal elections. This status, however, unlike citizenship, can be revoked at any time at the discretion of the minister of the interior, and even expire in some cases (B'Tselem, 2021). Meanwhile, Palestinians living in the West Bank (never formally annexed by Israel) are under military rule and deprived of any political rights (B'Tselem, 2021), with the Palestinian Authority only being allowed to exercise some limited civilian powers (in just about 40% of the territory) with Israel's consent. Additionally, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip (before the mass bombardment and destruction at the hands of Israel since October 2023) are subject to the Israeli blockade imposed in 2007. “Israel has continued to control nearly every aspect of life in Gaza from outside” (B'Tselem,

2021, para. 11), without the population there having any political say on the decisions that control their life.

In contrast, and except for the Gaza Strip, geographical space is continuous for Jewish citizens; whether they live within Israel's sovereign territory or in unannexed settlements east of the Green Line (the 1949 Armistice border or "demarcation line") is irrelevant to their legal status and rights (B'Tselem, 2021). As such, the State of Israel, then, "has divided the area [between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, which it effectively controls,] into several units, each with a different set of rights for Palestinians—always inferior to the rights of Jews" (B'Tselem, 2021, para. 37).

This divided space is enforced through a closure system which "includes a web of Israeli military checkpoints, blockades, blocked roads, gates and the winding fence/wall" (Amnesty International, 2022a, p. 96–97) that severely restricts or completely impedes the movement of Palestinians within the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) and between the OPT and Israel. It "separates Palestinians from their agricultural land, and hampers Palestinians' access to basic services, such as education and healthcare, and to work" (Amnesty International, 2022a, pp. 96–97). This multi-layered closure system includes the 700 km fence/wall that Israel started to build in 2002, mostly illegally on Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank, which was declared by the International Court of Justice to be contrary to international law. Israel was therefore found to be under obligation

to cease forthwith the works of construction of the wall being built in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, [and] to dismantle forthwith the structure therein situated, and to repeal or render ineffective forthwith all legislative and regulatory acts relating thereto, in accordance with paragraph 151 of this Opinion. (ICJ, 2004, pp. 69–70).

The Israeli state, however, has done nothing of the sort. It has continuously relied on this system of geographical enclosure targeted at Palestinian populations, a system predicated on a bureaucratic and military permits regime in which arbitrariness seems to be a constant feature, involving more than 100 types of permits issued by the Israeli Civil Administration (ICJ, 2004). The illegal wall isolated 38 Palestinian communities, trapping them in enclaves known as "seam zones", which have been declared by Israel's military commander as closed military zones. All Palestinians residing there, and all Palestinians visiting, need to acquire special permits for entry and exit to their homes, as well as separate permits to access their agricultural land. Acquiring any of these permits is not guaranteed for Palestinians. The declaration, however, explicitly exempted Israeli citizens and foreign nationals from these restrictions (ICJ, 2004). As such, "these restrictions on movement are unlawful, disproportionate and discriminatory as they only apply to Palestinians. They are also maintained in order to specifically ease and facilitate the movement of Jewish Israeli settlers, whose presence in the territory is illegal under international law" (Amnesty International, 2022a, p. 98).

Within Israel, a slew of legislation, such as the Nakba law (El-Ad & Jabareen, 2011) and the Boycott Law (Association for Civil Rights in Israel, 2011), is aimed at limiting the freedom of Israeli citizens to criticize government policies relating to Palestinians. However, Palestinians in the Occupied Territories face

even harsher restrictions, with a severe restriction on freedom of speech and the rights of organization, association and protest, which correspond to the inhumane act of denial of basic rights as outlined in the Apartheid Convention (Dugard & Reynolds, 2013, pp. 891–92).

Israel has historically enacted many discriminatory laws, such as the 1950 Absentee Property Law, which effectively allowed it to expropriate vast expanses of Palestinian-owned land previously belonging to residents who were expelled or fled in 1948 and who were then banned from returning (B'Tselem, 2021). A 2003 Temporary Order (still in force today) bans Palestinians from the Occupied Territory from being issued citizenship or permanent residency when they marry Israelis—unlike citizens of other countries who do so, who are entitled to such legal status (B'Tselem, 2021). Deliberate and discriminatory planning policies encourage and facilitate the development of Jewish cities and settlements, while hindering the development of Palestinian communities by the requirement to apply for permits that are rarely granted, the massively disproportionate targeting of Palestinians in house demolitions (Amnesty International, 2022a, p. 30; United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), 2007, p. 9) and the unequal distribution of water resources to the detriment of Palestinians (CERD, 2007, p. 9).

In limited cases, international law on occupation allows differential treatment between nationals of the occupying power and the occupied territory's population (Amnesty International, 2022a, p. 19), as well as the denial of the rights to vote and run for public office (Sfard, 2020, p. 39). However, as both Amnesty International (2022a) and the Israeli human rights organization Yesh Din (Sfard, 2020) remind us, this is only considered lawful under the condition of temporariness, which is not met in the case of Israel: "Israel is not working toward ending its control, but the opposite, cementing and perpetuating it, [so] the condition that the violation is permissible under international law is not met" (Sfard, 2020, p. 39).

Discriminatory civil rights restrictions are enforced in Occupied Territories through military courts, particularly through the heavy reliance on administrative detention (Amnesty International, 2022a; Sfard, 2020). In this way, thousands of Palestinians, including children, are held without trial under renewable detention orders, sometimes for years (Amnesty International, 2022a, p. 31; Dugard & Reynolds 2013, pp. 892–895). Administrative detention, by contrast, has rarely been evoked to detain Jewish Israeli citizens (Amnesty International, 2022a, p. 31). In general, and as already reported by the UNCERD in 2007 (p. 9), Israeli settlers and Palestinians living in the same geographical area are subject to different criminal laws, which translates into longer detention and harsher punishments for Palestinians than Israelis who commit the same offenses. Israeli authorities (the military, the Israel Prison Service, and the Israel Security Agency) also routinely mistreat and torture Palestinian detainees, including children (Amnesty International, 2022a, p. 31). As denounced by Amnesty International (2022a):

Israel's widespread and systematic use of arbitrary arrest, administrative detention and torture on a large scale against Palestinians, in flagrant violation of fundamental rules and peremptory norms of international law, forms part of the state's policy of domination and control over the Palestinian population (p. 31)

## 2.2.b Israel's 2018 Basic Law: Enshrining discrimination at the highest legal level

Palestinians, both in Israel and in the OPT, are treated by Israeli law and authorities "as an inferior racial group" considered to be a demographic threat by successive Israeli governments, who have all administered the territories they control "with the purpose of benefiting Jewish Israelis to the detriment of Palestinians, while Palestinian refugees continue to be excluded" (Amnesty International, 2022a, p.63). This apartheid regime, built through accumulative policies and laws, and with generally wide public and judicial support, has gradually become more institutionalized and explicit (Sfard, 2020), culminating in 2018 with the Knesset's passing of the Jewish Nation-State Basic Law, which states that "the right to national self-determination in the State of Israel is exclusive to the Jewish People" (Knesset, 2018). This "law of laws" has constitutional status and codifies discriminatory practices into law. By designating constitutional identity on ethnic grounds, it violates established international norms and bears distinct characteristics of apartheid being enshrined into law at the highest level (Adalah, 2018).

Although features of structural racism may indeed be present in many of the Western democracies with which Israel is often compared, there is, according to Nadia Abu-El-Haj (2024, p. xx), one "cardinal, material difference [in Israel]: racial inequality is written into the law". Because of this, scholars have begun to question Israel's self-presentation as "the only democracy in the Middle East" (Beck, 2020; Abu El-Haj, 2024, p. xx; Pappé, 2017, pp. 88–91). In fact, because around five million Palestinians live under a permanent occupation without any ability to have democratic political rights, Israel should not be considered as such, neither on the basis of a broad concept of democracy, nor a minimalist concept of democracy (Beck, 2020).

## 2.2.c Nakba as the erasure of Palestinian life, history, and self-determination

The State of Israel has managed the threat posed to it by Palestinian resistance, right of return, and demand for self-determination through dispossession, fragmentation, and control. Israeli state and settler violence restrict Palestinian access to essentials such as food, water, and electricity, maintaining a situation of constant crisis and need (B'Tselem, 2023; UN, 2022; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2022a; 2022b; 2023). Settler-colonial violence often escalates into massacre, such as that in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon, which was condemned as a genocide by the international community in 1982 (UNGA, 1982). Between 2010–2019 alone, Israeli forces and settlers injured over a hundred thousand Palestinians, many were displaced, and thousands were killed (OCHA, 2020). Israeli forces often use violence in the face of Palestinian resistance, such as in the Great March of Return (2018-2019 in Gaza). However, Israeli violence targets not only the Palestinian people and their living conditions, but also their cultural heritage, education, and memory (Abdullah, 2019; Iriqat et al., 2025; UNGA, 1982). Despite this, Palestinians maintain one of the highest literacy rates in the world (Irfan, 2023).

After October 7, 2023, with the support of the United States and its Western allies, Israel has engaged in the most comprehensive process of genocidal violence since the events of the 1948 Nakba. Israel has almost completely destroyed the infrastructure and cultural and religious heritage in Gaza (United Nations Satellite Centre, 2025; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2025), expanded settlements in the West Bank, and caused the death of countless Palestinians. Israel is, at the moment of writing, imposing starvation on the Palestinians of Gaza (Amnesty International, 2025; OCHA, 2025). After banning UNWRA—a key aid organization and safeguard of the Palestinian right of return—and prompting Western allies to cut its funding, Israel and the United States put in place a new aid distribution mechanism, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), a startup organization with no experience of distributing food in complex conflict zones (Ahmed et al., 2025). This system replaced over 400 aid points with just four militarized distribution sites, open only minutes at a time and run by private security contractors that routinely fire live ammunition into the crowds, where civilians are forced to risk death to obtain food (Ahmed et al., 2025). Since its implementation, over 1,000 Palestinians have been killed and thousands more have been injured while seeking aid (Ahmed et al., 2025; UN, 2025). Over 240 NGOs, including Oxfam, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), and Amnesty International, have condemned the GHF as an illegitimate and inhumane scheme designed to continue Israel's policy of forced starvation (Amnesty International Australia, 2025; Oxfam International, 2025).

These ongoing genocidal policies are the logical continuation of the Nakba and are the material manifestation of the core Zionist premise of Palestinian dispossession (Eghbariah, 2024). As such, when we mention genocide, we are not only talking about the most recent and horrific onslaught on Palestinians since October 2023, but about the broader ongoing targeted and systematic violence against the Palestinian people, which some scholars had already labeled “a slow-motion genocide” (Nijim, 2022). Due to the geopolitical importance of Israel for United States-led imperialism, Western states—including Sweden—continue their long-standing support of apartheid and genocidal policy, enabling its continued escalation. Crucially, while Palestinian academia fights to survive an ongoing scholasticide (Occupied Palestinian Territories Education Cluster, 2025), Swedish universities continue to legitimize and help finance the research-education apparatus that helped create, and still sustains, the Nakba. This position is intellectually and morally untenable.



## 2.3 Israeli universities in the making and maintenance of the Nakba

### 2.3.a The founding of Israeli universities and their military role in 1948 and before

Israeli universities have, even from before the official founding of Israel, played a key role in the Israeli illegal occupation of Palestinian lands, with deep and crucial ties to the Israeli military.

The first Israeli University, the Technion - Israel Institute of Technology, was founded in Haifa in 1912. Technion, along with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Weizmann Institute of Science, which were founded in 1918 and 1934 respectively, were the three Israeli universities founded before the Nakba of 1948 and thus before Israel's founding. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem is partly built in East Jerusalem, which is illegally occupied according to international law (Wind, 2024). In 1967, when Israel occupied East Jerusalem, it annexed three-quarters of the lands of the Palestinian village Issawiye'h to expand Hebrew University and build Israeli settlements, so that Israel has now expropriated over 90% of Issawiye'h's lands (Wind 2024).

Each of these universities had a different focus in Israel's state-building project (Wind, 2024). Technion - Israel Institute of Technology focused on engineering, providing instrumental arms research (Wind, 2024). The Weizmann Institute focused on science, while Hebrew University provided more general research and education (Wind, 2024). All three universities were actively involved in the Nakba. All universities hosted bases for the HEMED, the Science Corps for the Haganah (Wind 2024). The biology department in HEMED's base at the Hebrew University developed typhoid-dysentery bacteria that were used as a biological weapon to poison Palestinian water sources (Wind, 2024).

All these institutions helped develop different kinds of weapons, such as explosives, rockets, and mortar shells, that the Israeli military used in 1948 (Wind, 2024). Prominent Israeli figures of the time emphasized the importance of scientific research at these universities for furthering the goals of the Zionist movement. David Ben-Gurion, the first Israeli prime minister, and architect of the Nakba, declared that "science is one of the most powerful weapons for the realization of Zionism" (Wind, 2024, p. 66). In 1947, he also told Technion - Israel Institute of Technology Professor of Architecture Yochanan Ratner: "Scientists constitute a respectable portion of our potential, and we must enlist them. They can invent substitutes for raw materials that we lack, perhaps weapons that can be secretly manufactured" (Barell, 2014, p. 258; original in Hebrew, English translation from Kirsh, 2022, p. 3).

Technion's administration stated, days after Israel's Declaration of Independence, that the institution and its resources were at the disposal of the Israeli government (Kirsh, 2022). During the Nakba, it helped train air force technicians. These efforts were noticed by faculty at other universities, such as Edward Isaac Jacob Poznanski, who stated that, at Technion, "work toward the war effort was in full swing" (Kirsh, 2022, p. 4). Moreover, 150 Technion - Israel Institute of Technology students fought in the IDF in 1948, contributing directly to the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians (Kirsh, 2022).

The scientific director of the Weizmann Institute (or Sieff Institute, as it was known before 1949) openly bragged that its labs and equipment were at

the disposal of the IDF science corps, and that the university's staff worked "7 days a week, 24h a day", researching explosives, biological warfare, and manufacturing walkie-talkies and tear gas (Kirsh, 2022). The level of collaboration with the military was so extreme that Chaim Weizmann, the founder of the Weizmann Institute, said in 1948:

I have no information of what is really going on there except some scanty communication to the effect that the whole Institute is switching over to what is called war work. This means that the entire scientific basis of the Institute has been changed. ... There is no reason why the whole of the scientific work, into which so much energy, devotion, and love has been poured, should be replaced by something which is not science but making of explosives. ... It literally hurts me to feel that the Institute to which I have devoted so much energy and so many hours of endeavor should be desecrated. (Kirsh, 2022, p. 3)

In addition to providing direct support to the Israeli military during the Nakba, Israeli universities also served the role of facilitating settlement in Palestinian lands. For example, Ariel University, which was established as a college in 1982 but granted full university status in 2012, was established in the illegal West Bank settlement of Ariel; the upgrade was motivated by attracting new populations to settle there (Templer, 2007).

A similar but earlier case is the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, which was established for the same reasons in the Naqab/Negev. Following the 1948 Nakba, David Ben-Gurion endeavoured to increase Zionist settlements in the Galilee and the Negev. In 1959, he wrote:

Tel Aviv will strengthen and increase Israel's security and independence—if it spreads not only to the banks of the Yarkon, but first and foremost on the banks of the Jordan, the Dead Sea, the Gulf of Eilat, and the reaches of the Negev (Eldar, 2014, p. 28)

The university was established just 10 years later to motivate Zionist settlement in the Negev (Wind, 2024).

Similarly, the University of Haifa, which was partly built on the ruins of the Palestinian village of al-Khureiba (Wind, 2024), was founded in 1963 to promote Zionist settlement in the Galilee. The Galilee is the only region in Israel that still has a Palestinian majority. However, the Israeli government has been attempting to judaize the Galilee for decades through demographic engineering (Wind, 2024).

The founding of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem followed a similar logic in Jerusalem. Its first campus was built on the city's Mount Scopus, to attempt to establish a presence there (Wind, 2024). In 1948, Jerusalem was divided into West Jerusalem, under Israeli control, and East Jerusalem, under Jordanian control. Mount Scopus was an Israeli-controlled enclave within East Jerusalem. Hence, the campus there closed and moved to West Jerusalem, on top of the ruins of the depopulated Palestinian village of Sheikh Badr, facilitating the judaization of West Jerusalem (Wind, 2024). In 1948 and the following decade, the university stole 70,000 books left behind by the expelled Palestinians (Wind, 2024). Once East Jerusalem was occupied in 1967, the Mount Scopus campus reopened to facilitate the judaization of East Jerusalem (Wind, 2024).



As such, Israeli universities were, from their very foundation, weaponized to further the goals of the Zionist movement, and later of the State of Israel. The above are only examples that show the implication of Israeli universities with the Israeli military in the oppression, violence, and dispossession perpetuated against Palestinians. Such levels of collaboration and support for the Israeli military are therefore not a new development, but rather a founding principle of these universities. This continues to this day in the current genocide.

### 2.3.b Palestinian students and staff at Israeli universities\*

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, 2024a; 2024b; Gordon & Green, 2024; Middle East Monitor, 2014; New Arab, 2023). This has only increased since Hamas' attack on Israel on October 7, 2023 (Adalah, 2024c).

At the University of Haifa, over 90% of the students summoned to disciplinary committees between 2002 and 2010 were Palestinian (Wind, 2024). Between 2010 and 2015, Palestinian students were three times as likely as Jewish students to be summoned before these committees (Wind, 2024).

Since October 7, 2023, 124 students from 36 institutions contacted Adalah, the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, to request legal assistance in response to disciplinary actions that Israeli universities and colleges have taken against them because of their social media posts. The social media posts include posting the Palestinian flag, questioning the Israeli narrative, using terms like ethnic cleansing, massacre, and genocide, expressing solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza, including prayers for their well-being, and photos showing the destruction (Adalah, 2024b; 2024c).

At Netanya Academic College in October 2023, a group of Israelis attacked Palestinian students in the university dorms, while chanting "death to Arabs" (Saeed, 2023). The group of Israelis tried to enter the dorms, and only one police officer tried to prevent them from entering. Later, the mayor of Netanya arrived and accused the students of instigating the attack, based on unsubstantiated claims that a student threw two eggs at one of the Israelis. However, outside the dorm, the mayor was videotaped saying, "We will remove them and bring residents from settlements around the Gaza Strip; only then will they comprehend" (Saeed, 2023). The police also did not arrest any of the Israelis chanting "death to Arabs". The college later issued a statement, in which it stated that the police dismissed the claim by the Israelis that the Palestinian students hung Palestinian flags, as if that would justify the targeting of these students (Saeed, 2023).

These actions have created an environment of fear and repression against Palestinian students. 76% of Palestinian students do not trust the university or college administration, and 87% felt their sense of security and safety was damaged (Saeed, 2024).

This brief overview illustrates what Israeli scholar Maya Wind meticulously documented: all eight major public Israeli universities "operate in direct service

\* This subsection of the text first appeared in a slightly different version in our previous report (WASSAP, 2024).

of the state and serve critical functions in sustaining its policies, and thereby constitute central pillars of Israeli settler colonialism" (Wind, 2024, p. 12).

Continued collaboration with these institutions not only normalizes their actions but also enables them. An academic boycott is necessary, both to protect scholars in Sweden from working on projects that break international law and to enact positive change by helping to dismantle the system of oppression, destruction, and apartheid that the State of Israel maintains against Palestine and Palestinians.



# Section 3: Israeli universities complicit in genocide and their collaborations with Swedish universities

Since October 2023, WASSAP has been seeking concrete information regarding ongoing collaborations between Swedish and Israeli universities (see WASSAP, 2024). Students and staff have sent freedom of information requests to their respective universities, due to which public authorities such as universities are obliged to share official documents such as collaborations contracts (see Government Offices of Sweden - Ministry of Justice, 2020). These requests have, however, often been met with silence or explicit refusal, despite universities' legal requirement to fulfil these requests. We have nonetheless found many ongoing collaborations between institutions, both from universities that responded to our requests and through our own investigations. In this section, we lay out the collaborations, exchanges, and agreements we have found but, because we have received contradictory replies, it is possible that more collaborations exist beyond what is included here. There have been many collaborations between Swedish universities and Israeli universities in the past, which are not included in this report, but nonetheless indicate Swedish universities' connections to the current situation in Palestine. We first turn to how Israeli universities are implicated in the ongoing oppression of Palestinians before listing Swedish universities' collaborations with said universities. This section ends with a description of our attempts to establish collaborations between Palestinian and Swedish universities, followed by accounts of student and staff repression in the context of justice for Palestine.

### **3.1 Israeli universities' ongoing support of occupation and the IDF**

#### **3.1.a Institutional support by university**

To emphasize the importance of cutting ties and maintaining an ethical stance towards international research—a stance that emphasizes the right of all to live and to study without military occupation or scholasticide—we now detail the ways in which Israeli universities continue to support and aid in the oppression of Palestinians in the modern day, including the current genocide. Israeli academic institutions are thus complicit in the violence and vast destruction committed daily by the Israeli military: They develop the technology and machinery for war, and contribute to juridical, operational, and technological support for the continued occupation of Palestine.

#### **Hebrew University of Jerusalem**

Before October 7, 2023, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem already hosted a military base on its campus, meaning that the military is effectively permitted to install security and computer systems accessible solely to it, in any building of its choosing and, crucially, to screen employees—"meaning it could distance Arab lecturers, cleaners or maintenance workers" (Kubovich, 2019, para. 1). Hebrew University now actively supports "Operation Iron Sword" (the IDF's code name for their current operation in Gaza) by providing military units with logistics equipment (Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJI), 2023b, para. 13), having declared its "unwavering support for the IDF, security forces, rescue teams, and all citizens enduring the ongoing conflict" (HUJI, 2023a, para. 1).

The university also suspended Palestinian professor Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, under the justification that the suspension would preserve a safe climate on campus (Odeh, 2024). Hebrew University had been pressuring Shalhoub-Kevorkian to resign since late October 2023, after she signed a call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. Professor Shalhoub-Kevorkian's research has provided invaluable insights into the psychological and social ramifications of living under prolonged conflict and oppression. While Hebrew University lifted her suspension after a wave of public outcry, the threat of suspension nonetheless sent a clear message to scholars at the Hebrew University and worldwide, especially scholars critical of the Israeli genocide in Gaza and who call for a ceasefire (Sfard, 2023). Shalhoub-Kevorkian was later arrested on April 18, 2024 by the Israeli police and was held in humiliating and terrible conditions (Graham-Harrison & Kierszenbaum, 2024). She later resigned from her position. According to her defence lawyer, she did so because "it was impossible for her to work at a university defining itself as Zionist, but which at the same time talked about freedom of expression and education" (Bweerat, 2024, para. 6).

### **Tel Aviv University**

Tel Aviv University has exceptionally close ties to the Israeli government and the military industry (Rapoport, 2023). Tel Aviv University hosts the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), which aims to shape the "national security policies" of the regime. One of these was formulated during the 2021 attack on Gaza and argued for denying the entry of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian population as a military strategy (Riemer, 2023), something that has now been implemented in Palestine since October 7, 2023, to the point that virtually no aid is now allowed in the territory. Tel Aviv University also developed the Dahiya Doctrine in partnership with the Israeli military in 2008 (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. It was named after the Dahiya neighborhood in South Beirut, which Israel devastated in its 2006 war against Lebanon.

Furthermore, at Tel Aviv University's AI week in 2023, a private lecture was given by the commander of the Israeli military's secretive Unit 8200 (Abraham, 2024). During the lecture, the Lavender AI was presented. The tool generates thousands of "targets" to be bombed, at a much faster pace than humans could. The Israeli military relied on the tool to bomb so-called targets in Gaza during the current genocide. Two weeks into the genocide, the military began to adopt the kill lists generated by the tool, with little to no human oversight. A manual check may sometimes be performed, with one user stating that they spend 20 seconds to determine if the target is male or female. If the target was a man, permission to bomb him would be granted.

### **Technion - Israel Institute of Technology**

In 2008, Technion - Israel Institute of Technology opened a center for the development of electro-optics in collaboration with Elbit Systems, one of Israel's largest defense companies. Technion - Israel Institute of Technology helped develop the D9 remote-controlled bulldozer, which has been used throughout both historic Palestine before 1967 and the Occupied Palestinian

Territories since, to destroy and demolish Palestinian homes. It also developed "The Scream", an acoustic weapon that creates sound levels unbearable to humans at distances of up to 100 metres. This weapon has been widely used to suppress Palestinian protests. It can cause a shock that could lead to a heart attack (Loewenstein, 2023; Weizman, 2017).

### **University of Haifa**

The University of Haifa has been responsible for training officers of the Israeli military since 2018, offering a master's program in national security for members of the Israeli army and Israeli intelligence services such as Mossad and Shin Bet (Heights, 2018). It hosts an "Ambassadors online" course that aims to provide students with "Hasbara" training in collaboration with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, furthering the spread of pro-Israel propaganda. It also stated on its website (in a now-deleted statement) that it stands with "IDF officers, soldiers and the entire State of Israel" (University of Haifa, 2025) in the current war on Gaza.

University of Haifa hosts three Israeli military colleges comprising the Israeli Military Academic Complex, which the university states "form the backbone of the IDF's elite training programs" (Heights, 2018, para. 2). The University of Haifa holds courses at the Israeli military base of Gilot. It has provided equipment to soldiers carrying out the genocide in Gaza and established an emergency fund to offer stipends to student soldiers.

### **Bar-Ilan University**

Bar-Ilan University established the College of Judea and Samaria—now the independent Ariel University—on illegally occupied Palestinian land in the West Bank (Paraszczyk, 2012). Such settlements constitute war crimes under international law.

Its Engineering Faculty has hosted "hackathons" in collaboration with the Israeli military and the Israeli arms producer Elbit Systems (Bar-Ilan University, 2023a; 2023b).

The Security Forces Section of the university provides support and tailors its coursework and study days to accommodate defense system employees and soldiers who are active on duty (Bar-Ilan University, 2025). Additionally, the university works with Shin Bet (Shabak, The Israeli Intelligence Agency), which has documented cases of torture and illegal violent interrogation tactics against Palestinians according to the UN Committee Against Torture (United Nations Commission on Human Rights, 2002; Human Rights Watch, 1994).

### **Weizmann Institute of Science**

The Weizmann Institute of Science has been a "military-scientific center of the Israeli state" (Wind, 2024, p. 91), where faculty and senior administrators have led the development of Israeli military industries (Wind, 2024).



Weizmann Institute offers a master's program for soldiers (Weizmann Institute of Science, 2025a) and has opened an academy that will prepare high school seniors for “meaningful military service” (Weizmann Institute of Science, 2025b). It also collaborates with Elbit Systems, Israel Aerospace Industries, and other Israeli weapons manufacturers (BDS Movement, 2024).

### **Reichman University**

Reichman University hosts the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism. The institute praised Yoav Gallant, the Israeli minister of defense during the genocide and wanted war criminal by the International Criminal Court, describing him as “honourable” (International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, 2025).

On its social media, the university has been proudly posting pictures of its students participating in the Gaza genocide. Pictures include soldiers posing among the rubble in Gaza that they created, calling a neighborhood significant for them because they managed to “accumulate many achievements” there (Reichman University, 2024a). One of the pictures appears to show the soldiers eating in the home of a displaced Palestinian family, with the Star of David being drawn on the wall (Reichman University, 2024a).

The university also hosts the Herzliya conference annually, a summit attended by speakers from the Israeli Ministry of Defense, the IDF, and the Israeli Air Force (Reichman University, 2024b).

### **Ariel University**

Ariel University is built on illegal Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian land in the West Bank.

### **Bezalel University**

Bezalel University created volunteer teams from its students and faculty to build and customize gear for the IDF (Steinberg, 2023). On October 22, 2023, around 80 volunteers worked from 9 am to 8 pm.

### **Ben-Gurion University**

Ben-Gurion University hosts the Homeland Security Institute. This institute partners with the Israeli Ministry of Defense and with top Israeli weapons companies (BDS Movement, 2024). The military is also building a technology campus right next to the university campus, which will “reinforce the army's operational capabilities” (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2019, para. 6).

## Beit Berl College

Beit Berl hosts the Be'eri Mechina pre-military program (Be'eri Mechina, 2025). Future IDF soldiers take this program before joining the military. It includes physical training and field weeks to prepare them for military service (Be'eri Mechina, 2025).

## The Open University of Israel

The Open University of Israel has a particularly close relationship with the Israeli military, integrating soldiers—especially those from intelligence, cyber warfare, and commando units—into its academic programs. The institution frames this involvement as part of its mission to strengthen the army's technological capabilities and to prepare future national leaders, explicitly supporting active-duty soldiers through higher education initiatives.

### 3.1.b Israeli university statements in support of the IDF

Israeli universities openly support the IDF and active-duty soldiers. Here are some examples of statements that can be found on some of their websites.

#### **The Open University of Israel**

"Perhaps the most unique population of students at the OUI are IDF soldiers. ... Soldiers from the IDF's most elite groups, including intelligence, cyber warfare, and commando frontline units, study towards their undergraduate degrees during their military service. ... These young people are part of a select group on whose expert shoulders the technological prowess of the army rests, and who contribute significantly to the security of the State of Israel. ... The Open University believes that by supporting active-duty soldiers in pursuing their higher education, we will empower thousands of young people, ... preparing the way for Israel's future leaders." (American Friends of the Open University of Israel, n.d., para. 1)

#### **Hebrew University**

"The Hebrew University, universities and colleges nationwide lit up their campus buildings in the colors of the Israeli flag, showing unwavering support for the IDF, security forces, rescue teams, and all citizens enduring the ongoing conflict" (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2023, para. 1).

**Tel Aviv  
University**

"Tel Aviv University Helps Make Case Before International Court of Justice: Legal Delegation in Israel vs. South Africa Hearing included Alumni and Former Faculty. ... A legal team representing Israel argued why a case by South Africa accusing the Jewish state of genocide in Gaza was not only unfounded and out of context. ... And, both before the court and behind the scenes at the ICJ hearing in The Hague that day, Tel Aviv University (TAU) was present in a significant way" (Tel Aviv University, 2024, para. 1).

**Technion -  
Institute of  
Technology**

Regularly features stories of "student or faculty or staff ... about how they're ... helping the war effort or on the home front" (Technion, 2023, para. 23).

For instance: "The online war is looking marginally better, but we're still starting far behind our enemies. ... What Zach and his team have created in 10 days is no less than an army of robots to massively increase the impact of pro-Israel efforts on social media. When deployed on a larger scale, this will most certainly shift the balance of content in the right direction and take away the advantage of numbers from our online enemies. We are proud to have Zach in the Technion family and wish him and his team tremendous success." (Technion, 2023, para. 7–22)

**Ben-Gurion  
University**

"The future growth and development of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev into the North Campus is intimately tied to our growing relationship with the nascent IDF technology and intelligence bases springing up in and around Beer-Sheva ... The dedication of the first building of the IDF's new tech campus is the harbinger of great developments that will bring thousands of outstanding soldiers to this base, many of whom will also complete degrees at [Ben-Gurion University] in parallel with their service ... I am looking forward to watching the rest of the army's tech campus grow, and of course to overseeing [Ben-Gurion University]'s collaboration with the military as the units themselves move south" (Ben-Gurion University President Daniel Chamovitz, cited in Americans for Ben-Gurion University, 2019, para. 6–11; see Bolliger et al., 2024, for more such comments by Ben-Gurion University officials).

### 3.1.c Summary of Israeli universities' involvement in the genocide

University	Involvement	Type of Support / Activity
<b>Hebrew University of Jerusalem</b>	Hosts a military base on campus, publicly supports "Operation Iron Sword," and has taken disciplinary action against a Palestinian professor.	Provides logistical support to the military, enforces reprisals against critical academics, and engages in political advocacy.
<b>Tel Aviv University</b>	Maintains close cooperation with the IDF, contributed to the development of the Dahiya Doctrine, and has advanced AI technologies (e.g., "Lavender") for target identification	Engages in the development of military doctrine, weapons-related AI, and supports military strategies that restrict humanitarian aid.
<b>Technion – Israel Institute of Technology</b>	Collaborates with arms manufacturers such as Elbit; contributed to the development of the D9 bulldozer and the sonic weapon "The Scream."	Specializes in weapons technology, the suppression of protests, and military robotics.
<b>University of Haifa</b>	Trains IDF and Mossad officers, runs pro-Israel propaganda programs, and hosts military colleges on campus.	Provides military education, disseminates propaganda, and offers direct support to soldiers involved in operations in Gaza.
<b>Bar-Ilan University</b>	Founded Ariel University on occupied land, organizes hackathons with the IDF and Elbit, and collaborates with Shin Bet.	Supports illegal settlements, develops military and surveillance technologies, and maintains ties to security services accused of torture.
<b>Weizmann Institute of Science</b>	Offers specialized master's programs for soldiers, prepares youth for military service, and collaborates with the weapons industry.	Contributes to military education, weapons research, and recruitment.
<b>Reichman University</b>	Publicly praises military leadership, publishes glorifying images of students in Gaza's ruins, and hosts the influential Herzliya Conference.	Normalizes the genocide through propaganda, and facilitates military networking and policy events.
<b>Ariel University</b>	Located within illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.	Supports settlement infrastructure and violates international law.
<b>Bezalel University</b>	Manufactures equipment for the IDF.	Provides direct material support to the military.
<b>Ben-Gurion University</b>	Cooperates with arms companies and hosts a new IDF technical campus adjacent to the university.	Conducts military research and promotes future integration with the IDF.
<b>Beit Berl College</b>	Runs a pre-military preparatory program (Be'eri Mechina).	Trains youth in preparation for IDF service.
<b>Open University of Israel</b>	Offers academic programs specifically designed for elite IDF soldiers during active service.	Provides academic support to the military and contributes to the legitimization of the occupation.

## 3.2 Swedish universities' ties to complicit Israeli universities

### University of Gothenburg

Among EU-financed projects are REDRESS (University of Haifa), IRISCC (Ben-Gurion University), HRJUST (University of Haifa), PANACEA (Weizmann Institute of Science), and PRD (Ben-Gurion University). These EU-funded research projects reveal close ties between Swedish and Israeli institutions that span many disciplines. Collaborations also feature private-funded projects, such as the ongoing NNF Microbiome Health Initiative (Weizmann Institute of Science), signed in June 2025. Apart from these projects, University of Gothenburg's School of Business, Economics and Law maintains a student exchange program with the Israeli Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya (Reichman University), although it is currently paused.

### Karolinska Institute

Karolinska Institute, meanwhile, has two active collaborations. The most recent is a student and teacher exchange agreement with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, signed in 2022. Since 2015, Karolinska has also had a Memorandum of Understanding with the Weizmann Institute of Science (5-86/2014).

### Linköping University

Linköping University has an ongoing agreement with Tel Aviv University (agreement number HMV-2024-00140). Linköping University has numerous collaborations at the departmental level with Israeli universities, including the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the University of Haifa, Bar-Illan University, Tel Aviv University, the Israel Institute of Technology, and Ben-Gurion University.

### Malmö University

Since 2007, Malmö University has had an extensive agreement with Ben-Gurion University, encompassing research collaborations and staff and student exchanges, with the host university offering support to incoming staff and students (79-07/399).

### Stockholm University

Stockholm University has an agreement of cooperation with Tel Aviv University and a student exchange program with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (renewed May 2023). At the departmental level, the Department of Education has a Memorandum of Understanding with Beit Berl College since 2021; there is a student exchange agreement (for up to two students per year) between the law department and the University of Haifa, and an exchange agreement between Stockholm Business School and the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya. Additionally, the Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies has an exchange agreement with the Faculty of Humanities at the Hebrew University of

Jerusalem, which was renewed on February 10, 2023. Furthermore, Stockholm University is involved in a research project that includes a partner from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, funded by the European Research Council (project number: 101125269).

### **Uppsala University**

Information from Uppsala University has been particularly difficult to attain, with administrators claiming the university does not have a centralized list of all collaborations and that it is each department's responsibility to provide a list of their collaborations. However, many departments have not responded to our legally binding requests to disclose their ties. From the institutions that did respond, we discovered an Erasmus exchange program with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, a collaboration between the Department of Ecology and Genetics and Tel Aviv University, and a collaboration between the Department of Chemistry and Tel Aviv University.

### **Lund University**

Lund University has active collaborations with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Ben-Gurion University, the Technion - Israeli Institute of Technology, Tel Aviv University, and the Weizmann Institute of Science. The Faculty of Natural Sciences is involved in EU projects (Horizon Europe) with Ben-Gurion University and the Technion Research and Development Foundation. Lund Faculty of Engineering (LTH, part of Lund University) also has two Horizon Europe projects with Technion. The Faculty of Law has a shared Erasmus+ project with HUJI. The Faculty of Medicine has an agreement with the Weizmann Institute of Science and Tel-Aviv University.

### **Chalmers University**

Chalmers University of Technology is currently part of the Integrated Sensing and Communications for Future Vehicular Systems (ISLANDS) doctoral network, which is conducted in collaboration with the Weizmann Institute of Science. Researchers from Chalmers are working on the AutoPiM: Efficient Accelerator for Autonomous Vehicles project as part of an Israeli-Swedish research collaboration with researchers from the Engineering Faculty at Bar-Ilan University. Additionally, Chalmers is involved in the OpenSuperQPlus project with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and SUM with Tel Aviv University. Particularly concerning is the recently established (June 1, 2025) Robustifai generative AI project in cooperation with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

### **Royal Institute of Technology (KTH)**

Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) has had numerous collaborations with Israeli universities. Currently, KTH is involved in the SoftEnable Horizon Europe project, which is carried out in partnership with the Technion - Israel Institute of Technology, and has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

## Örebro University

Örebro University maintains a student mobility program and is in a research network with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

To the best of our knowledge, the following Swedish universities and colleges do not have any institutional collaborations with Israeli universities: Umeå University, Luleå University of Technology, Karlstads university, Linnaeus University, Mid Sweden University, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Blekinge Institute of Technology, Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences, University of Borås, Halmstad University, University of Skövde, Kristianstad University, University West, Södertörn University, University of Gävle, Dalarna University College, Stockholm University of the Arts, Royal Institute of Art, Royal College of Music in Stockholm, Swedish Defence Conscription and Assessment Agency, and Swedish Defence University.

### 3.3 Swedish universities' non-academic ties to complicit Israeli institutions

In addition to academic ties, Swedish universities and institutions are complicit in the genocide in other ways. For example, over 700 million crowns of Swedish pension fund money is invested in Palantir (Lundin, 2024). Sjunde AP-fonden, the default fund for those who do not make a choice, invests 379 million of those (Lundin, 2024). Palantir supports Israel by developing AI technologies used in killer robots (Lundin, 2024). They also provide Israel with tools to monitor and surveil social media (Lundin, 2024). This means that the vast majority of university workers have direct links to these funds which support Israeli apartheid.

Many universities have strategic partnerships with companies that support and facilitate Israel's war crimes. For example, Uppsala University has a strategic partnership with Hitachi (Uppsala University, 2025), which provides Israel with bulldozers that are used to demolish Palestinian homes in the West Bank and the Naqab. Furthermore, its machinery is used to build illegal settlements in the West Bank. The company also helps develop computing storage systems used by Israeli police (Who Profits, 2024).

Additionally, the University of Gothenburg has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Yad Vashem World Holocaust Remembrance Center, who is actively denying that Israel is perpetrating genocide (Lidor, 2025), and the following collaborations: EPND (European Platform for Neurodegenerative Disorders) with Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd. and PARC (Partnership for the Assessment of Risk from Chemicals) with the Israeli Ministry of Health.

### 3.4 Our attempts to start collaborations between Palestinian and Swedish universities: Uppsala University as a case study

Following months of protests and an encampment at Uppsala University, the vice chancellor of Uppsala University, Anders Hagfeldt, indicated Uppsala



University's willingness to start collaborations with Palestinian Universities, stating:

You want Uppsala University to actively seek cooperation with Palestinian universities and to support Palestinian universities, lecturers and students. I agree with you and will instruct our Division for Internationalisation to study the proposals for cooperation that you have formulated (Berndt, 2024, para. 19).

Therefore, WASSAP and Uppsala Academics for Palestine began contacting several Palestinian universities to inform them of this development and to gauge their interest in potential collaborations with Uppsala University. Three Palestinian universities officially contacted Uppsala University's Division of Internationalization to explore starting collaborations: An-Najah National University (sent on May 30, 2024) and Al Quds University (sent on June 10, 2024) in the West Bank, and the Islamic University of Gaza (sent by June 27, 2024) in the Gaza Strip. The latter also made a request to start collaborations, at the department level, the Department of Electrical Engineering at Uppsala University. However, Uppsala University's responses have been disappointing, saying they will "review [Palestinian universities'] request in [their] ordinary process for requests". Making matters worse is that there has been no communication from Uppsala University to any Palestinian university beyond the standard response in eight months. As of January 21, 2025, none of the Palestinian universities have received further emails from Uppsala University. Uppsala University's so-called "ordinary process for requests" implies regular communication, while the lack of any communication from Uppsala University implies that the standard process for Palestinian universities is not a process at all.

This one example illustrates a common attitude among administrators at many Swedish universities, in which the declared interest in establishing collaborations with willing Palestinian academic institutions (as a result of unrelenting requests from students and staff in those Swedish universities) rarely results in active efforts to put these collaborations in place.

### **3.5 Repression of students and staff in the context of justice for Palestine**

Over the last two years, peaceful protests worldwide have been met with various forms of suppression, repression and discrimination. Particularly, the student movement is facing violent attacks and criminalization, violating their fundamental rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association (Romero, 2024). In Sweden, students and staff have been systematically hindered, forbidden or punished for engaging in any pro-Palestine initiative, from merely showing solidarity by wearing keffiyehs to trying to implement academic boycotts. We have experienced and witnessed both overt and insidious forms of suppression. Among the former, illegal detainment, death threats, intimidations, defaming, racist aggressions, discriminatory treatment and retaliation on academic careers. Less direct but equally harmful backlash include discrimination, surveillance, censoring, social condemnation and silencing.

University administrations maintain a system of silencing and erasure of anything (and anyone) related to Palestine. In some instances, they framed Southwest Asian and North African students as security threats, publicly exposing them to death threats and Islamophobic and racist aggressions. However, they are not alone in oppressing Palestinians' and activists' rights and freedom. Civil society organizations, municipalities, mainstream media, political parties, and even government officials have contributed to restrict, discredit and oppose the movement.

The incidences of repression urged Lund Academics for Palestine to document incidents through an online survey (<https://tally.so/r/wkYNLj>). A preliminary report available on our website (WASSAP, 2025; in <https://wassap.se/reports/>) shows how patterns of silencing, censorship and repression are systemic and widespread.



# Section 4: The failed responsibility of Swedish universities: Between justice and international law

Throughout the course of over a hundred years of war on Palestine, international law has, again and again, failed Palestinians. From the Balfour Declaration and the partition plan, to the creation of an apartheid regime, stretching from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, the right to self-determination (in its different forms of development throughout history) of the Palestinian people has been consistently violated and refused (Erakat, 2019; Imseis, 2021). It is often said that Palestine is the exception to international law, but international law seldom serves the peoples victimized by imperial force (Knox, 2021). In this section, we discuss different ways of understanding international law, and show how international legal norms and their meaning have changed, over time, to express the dispossession of Palestine. At the same time, we show how international law has historically been leveraged by anti-imperialist resistance to formulate demands that are not marginalized and defensive but seeking justice for a people forced to choose between apartheid rule and exile. Finally, we show how Swedish universities contribute to the always ongoing transformation of international legal norms by choosing to disregard them.

Swedish academia has not only surrendered—to the discretion and interests of the Swedish state—their responsibilities according to norms of international law: They are also framing the genocide in a way that supports the legality of Israel's extreme use of force, while further marginalizing the Palestinian right to self-determination and of return. Relatedly, we show how universities' willingness to cede scholarly autonomy to state discretion has resulted in an unscientific divide between *neutral* and *political* discourses about Palestine and an increased repression of politicized views. In conclusion, we insist that Swedish universities make a different choice: that they honor that minimum level of integrity which universal norms of international law—such as they currently stand—still afford. In so doing, they would defend the integrity of these norms, end their own complicity in apartheid and genocide, and preserve academic autonomy and freedom.

#### 4.1 The meaning and function of international law in the context of Palestinian self-determination

International law is sometimes considered as a body of written and unwritten norms—treaty and custom—whose central problem is framed as one of enforceability (Miéville, 2005). This perspective loses sight of how and why norms and their meaning change over time and place. In fact, international legal norms do not contain a fixed meaning, but enable different interpretations that are equally defensible and mutually contradictory (Miéville, 2005). In our view, it is more helpful to place the core of international law not in the norms enshrined in treaties and conventions, but in the actions of states and to some extent non-state actors (Baars, 2019; Knox, 2021; Miéville, 2005; Pashukanis, 2003). This perspective sees international law as a language whose normative force is ultimately decided not by the inner logic of a closed system of rules, but by the military and economic prowess primarily of powerful state interests (which necessarily appear in the form of law).

When we employ a perspective that considers the force of states, and to some extent other actors, as the core of international law, it becomes helpful to speak of three levels of international law, whose interplay determines its development.

First, we have the written and customary norms of international law—the ‘text’ of international law—such as different conventions, statutes, and resolutions. The meaning and relative importance of different norms, and the question of who gets to decide on the meaning and importance of these norms, is always changing. For example, through sustained practice and justification, Israel has shifted the baseline of proportionality and what levels of violence constitute war, normalizing higher levels of violence as lawful (Erakat, 2019). Second, we have the legal actions of states—legal, not necessarily because they are mandated by the norms of international law, but because they form its basis. Third and relatedly, we have the broader context of viable legal arguments available to states and other legal actors. Such arguments are not confined to the existing corpus of norms; through interpretation, conceptual novelty, and practice, states can introduce and normalize entirely new categories. For example, in the context of the so-called “war on terror”, the US asserted and practiced an interpretation of existing law: that the right of self-defense can be invoked against non-state actors, even across borders. Israel is making eager use of this new development of international law, framing their genocide of the Palestinian people as a war against Hamas and as a humanitarian issue.

Focusing on the legal actions of states, rather than the international norms as such, furthermore reveals how disregarding even the most fundamental, non-negotiable norms is often the rule, rather than the exception. Such was the case, for example, with the near-total absence of enforcement after the 2004 Advisory opinion on the illegal wall; after the ICJ’s January 2024 provisional-measures order instructing Israel and the international community—including public institutions—to prevent genocidal acts in Gaza; and after the 2024 advisory opinion reiterating charges of apartheid against Israel (ICJ, 2004; 2024a; 2024d); all of which led not to consequence but support for continued Israeli violence by the major Western states. Finally, a focus on the actions of states highlights how they are unwilling to bind themselves to international norms that they are apparently unable and unwilling to follow. For example, Israel is not a party to the Apartheid Convention (UNGA, 1973), which makes it immune from charges before the International Court of Justice under that Convention. Israel’s unwillingness to accede to the Apartheid Convention is unsurprising, since the country has long upheld a *de facto* one-state solution, characterized by a unitary apartheid regime between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea (Eghbariah, 2024; Erakat, 2019; Falk & Tilley, 2017). Moreover, Israel never ratified Additional Protocol (I) to the Geneva Conventions (Additional Protocol I, 1977), which includes Article 1(4) protecting the rights of peoples “fighting against colonial domination and alien occupation and against racist régimes in the exercise of their right of self-determination” (p. 240).

## 4.2 The structural dismissal of colonial injustice by international law

Since the actions of powerful states make up the core of international law, international legal norms exhibit a clear bias against colonized peoples and countries positioned in the periphery of global empires (Erakat, 2019). This has major implications for the Palestinian case, where international law has often been used to subvert and defuse claims of justice rather than to strengthen them. For example, the United States has vetoed Security Council resolutions critical of Israeli policy over 45 times (O’Dell, 2024), and the United Nations General Assembly resolution in 1982—naming the Sabra and Shatila massacres

as a genocide—has been largely forgotten by Western states (Erakat, 2019; UNGA, 1982). Crucially, the Palestinian right to self-determination and of return are marginalized by key legal categories such as occupation, apartheid, and genocide. While these categories are useful, they capture only surface aspects of the Palestinian condition and risk obscuring the broader context. This broader context is the ongoing Nakba—the materialization of Zionism—premised on the dispossession of the Palestinian people (Eghbariah, 2024; Erakat, 2019). Being abstracted from the Nakba and the context of colonial language, these categories can be argued to not apply to “the question of Palestine”.

First, the concept of occupation has since its inception welcomed colonial conquest rather than limited it. Palestinian legal scholar Rabea Eghbariah (2024) explains how the legal concept of occupation was developed in distinction from those of conquest and colonization, which in the late nineteenth century recognized a victor’s right to territorial conquest. He writes:

Rooted in the material and conceptual transformations in nineteenth-century Europe, the burgeoning law of occupation sought to regulate certain violence that applied between ‘civilized’ nations. The concepts of conquest and colonial occupation as applied by European nations to non-European peoples were thus initially excluded from the doctrine of belligerent occupation (Eghbariah, 2024, pp. 935–6).

Apartheid, on the other hand, quickly after its inception as a crime of international law, came to focus excessively on surface symptoms of discrimination between groups, rendering invisible those root causes which would in the Palestinian case recognize the continuity of the Israeli apartheid regime in historic Palestine (Eghbariah, 2024; Sultany, 2022). Consequently, liberal human rights organizations seldom, if ever, discuss the Israeli and US imperialist denial of self-determination as a root cause and structural ground for apartheid rule across all of Palestine (Sultany, 2022).

Finally, the legal concept of genocide provides a striking example. This concept demands the existence of intent to destroy a group *as such*—a form of intent to such an extent uncoupled from social context that might not be possible (Goldberg, 2024). In this way, Israeli and Zionist actors sometimes claim that, because their intended goal is to obliterate Hamas and any of its potential military capabilities, the destruction of Palestinian lives and conditions for life for any and all civilians is but a “collateral damage” in pursuit of their military goal, rather than their explicit intent (Ahmed, 2024). However, this cynical view erases the IDF’s intentionality in targeting civilians (Ahmed, 2024), and is disproven by the statements of numerous Israeli generals and individuals from the upper echelons of the Israeli government (including the President, Prime Minister, and Knesset members), who have explicitly called for the destruction of Palestinians as an ethnic or religious group, targeting the civilian population and all necessary conditions for life (B’Tselem, 2025; Law for Palestine, 2024). Still, the legal definition of genocide is inherently narrow, as it was largely shaped by the political interests of the states whose representatives drafted this stringent legal definition (Schabas, 2009; B’Tselem, 2025); as such,

[t]he high threshold established by the legal standard and the dominant interpretations adopted by international tribunals have led to a paradoxical situation in which genocide is typically recognized only after



a significant portion of the targeted group has already been destroyed and the group as such has suffered irreparable harm (B'Tselem, 2025, p. 12).

Moreover, and since Israeli violence upon Palestinian land is settler colonial, in other words aimed toward the settlement of Palestinian lands, the question of genocidal intent is further muddled by the structural shortcomings of its definition (Krever et al., 2024). When the Genocide Convention was drafted, United Nations member states deliberately sought to and succeeded in excluding colonial and settler colonial genocide from its scope (Stahn, 2025). They did this to avoid being held accountable for past colonial and settler colonial violence (Stahn, 2025).

From underneath these patchwork legal concepts and their inability to grasp root causes, Eghbariah (2024) shows how the Nakba “has evolved from a historical calamity into a brutally sophisticated structure of oppression. This ongoing Nakba includes episodes of genocide and variants of apartheid but remains rooted in a historically and analytically distinct foundation, structure, and purpose” (p. 887). He argues that international law lacks the categories and language to “accurately capture the totality of Palestinian subjugation” (Eghbariah, 2024, p. 888), and proposes the introduction of *Nakba* as a crime of international law, a category that captures and criminalizes the logic of settler colonial violence premised on the destruction of the native peoples and the denial of their right to self-determination. In so doing, the Nakba would bring into international law the criminalization of settler colonialism, an injustice long denied recognition *as such* (Krever et al., 2024; Stahn 2025). Framed as an ongoing event and a structure, the Nakba renders occupation, apartheid, and genocide as surface manifestations of Zionism’s foundational premise: the dispossession of the Palestinian people and the denial of their right of return and self-determination.

As we continue to witness the massacres in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Yemen over the past two years, the debate to whether these actions carried out by the Zionist regime can live up to the definition of a genocide becomes redundant at this stage. These debates are distractions which divert the conversations away from the atrocities committed by Israel, and attempts to over-analyze, and over-theorize what has been one of the most broadcasted massacres in modern history. Many genocide and apartheid scholars (Brooks & Griffiths, 2024; Eghbariah, 2024) have explained that our use of these two terms to describe what unfolds in historic Palestine is only to allow us to comprehend what unfolds, meanwhile, what the Palestinians witness goes far beyond the legal definitions of Genocide and Apartheid. As UN experts have now warned:

“While States debate terminology—is it or is it not genocide?—Israel continues its relentless destruction of life in Gaza, through attacks by land, air and sea, displacing and massacring the surviving population with impunity, ... one of the most ostentatious and merciless manifestations of the desecration of human life and dignity” (OHCHR, 2025a, paras. 2–4)

With that in mind, we are mindful in this report not to entertain such debates too much, as they become argumentative baits to instill hopelessness and what even sophisticated academics fail to engage critically with, in fear of the topic being a complicated one. However, for readers who are persistent

on categorizations, this report has shown the consensus on the genocide categorization by over 240 organizations (see section 4.5.a of this report). Additionally, the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) has passed a resolution on August 31, 2025 recognizing that actions of Israel in Gaza meets the UN definition of genocide (UNGA, 1948a) in Article II of the United Nations Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (IAGS, 2025). A question we pose at this moment: Which entity is left to label the actions of the Israeli regime in Gaza as genocide, for the management of Swedish Universities to recognize it as such and take the needed action to uphold their ethical and moral obligation?

#### Israel's use of international law: Palestine as a legal laboratory

##### 4.3

At nearly every juncture in over a century of war against Palestine, international law has been reshaped in ways that further marginalize non-Jewish Palestinian self-determination. Beginning with the League of Nations' mandate system, where Article 22's requirement of the consent of the governed was ignored by the imperial powers, the imperialist struggle against Palestinian self-determination was soon continued through the UN Partition Plan, the Nakba, and the establishment of the State of Israel. The Palestinian right of return, later affirmed in UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (III), was further diminished when Israel was admitted to the United Nations despite violations of the non-discrimination provisions of Resolution 194 (III), and despite the General Assembly's own demand, reflected in that same resolution, that Israel permit the return of forcibly displaced Palestinian refugees (UNGA, 1948b). Since then, state practice has continued to narrow these rights, translating them, as Palestinian legal scholar Noura Erakat puts it, into a "limited autonomy arrangement" articulated in the language of occupation (Erakat, 2019).

In considering Israel's mobilization of international law, some of the logic behind the development of international law becomes visible, as does the complicity of Swedish universities. Through their legal positioning and even their framing of the genocide of Palestinians, Swedish universities have risked reinforcing ongoing transformations of international law led by Israeli and US imperial power. Since at least 1967, Israel has advanced a crucial legal move: to cast the West Bank and Gaza as *sui generis*, as exceptional territories without a sovereign (Erakat, 2019). This move has enabled Israel to assert that only the humanitarian parts of the law of occupation apply (food, water, health), while the status-protecting rules (preserving territorial, legal, and demographic conditions) do not. This construction has produced a legal limbo in which Palestinians are neither Israeli citizens nor a recognized sovereign under occupation, and Israeli authorities retain broad discretionary power under a permanent "security" rationale (Erakat, 2019). In addition, Israel has justified extreme measures such as targeted killings—well beyond what an occupying power may lawfully use—by casting the situation as a form of "almost war", thereby avoiding recognition of Palestinians as legitimate parties (Erakat, 2019). All in all, these legal moves are constructed to turn the legal status of Palestinians into an aid-dependent people void of sovereign right, and with no right to defend themselves against extreme Israeli violence. And, as Maya Wind (2024) shows, Israeli universities (particularly law and ethics departments) have played a key role in this process of "legal innovation," developing new legal doctrines in service of the Israeli military and security state, that are designed

to not only circumvent accountability for Israel in the international arena, but to transform this arena itself (p. 36).

Over time, Israel has leveraged UN Security Council Resolution 242, calling for the withdrawal from “territories occupied”, to further their interest in territorial expansion (Erakat, 2019). The final text of the resolution is ambiguous, and it has enabled an interpretation that treats the West Bank and Gaza as “disputed territories” rather than unequivocally occupied land (Erakat, 2019). With sustained United States diplomatic, economic and military backing, this reading was normalized in international forums, helping to shield Israel from legal accountability while facts were changed on the ground through settlement expansion. At that same time, Israel managed to further instrumentalize occupation law. Fully denying occupation at this time would strengthen arguments for extending citizenship to Palestinians, undermining a Jewish demographic majority. Fully accepting occupation would require maintaining the pre-1967 status quo, hence constraining expansion. The “*sui generis*” formula, the idea that Palestine was *empty land*, empty of right, split the difference: this formula kept control without absorbing the population or freezing settlement growth, narrowing Palestinians’ claims to humanitarian relief while sidelining collective rights such as self-determination and return. This strategy was further aided by the Oslo process (Erakat, 2019). Through the Oslo Accords, limited, fragmented Palestinian autonomy was established within Israel’s overall authority and military reach. In practice, this entrenched a *de facto* one-state reality with differentiated legal regimes: Israeli sovereignty and mobility over territory and resources, alongside confined, non-sovereign Palestinian enclaves (Erakat, 2019; Eghbariah, 2024). This arrangement deferred core status questions while normalizing ongoing annexation by administrative means, made possible by the military and political support of United States’ imperialism (Erakat, 2019).

Most recently, Israel has reframed the longstanding Palestinian struggle for self-determination as a “war between Israel and Hamas”, shifting the goalposts even further; this time from occupation and from frameworks that foreground apartheid or colonial domination, and towards issues of self-defense, the broader emerging security context of the United States’ war on terror, and humanitarian protection and aid. This move effectively recasts a century of war against Palestine, and of Palestinian anti-imperialist resistance, into questions of counterterrorism and humanitarian catastrophe. In framing the genocide as a conflict between Israel and Hamas, and lamenting seemingly apolitical “Palestinian suffering” while actively supporting Israeli partner universities, Swedish academia is deeply complicit in this ongoing legal work.

At the moment of writing, Israeli policies of creeping annexation and the refusal to recognize the Palestinian right to self-determination and return have necessarily resulted in the entrenchment and administration of an apartheid regime to control the Palestinian population and to suppress resistance and claims of self-determination. This configuration is unlikely to be sustainable for Israel in the long term; the ongoing genocide in Gaza may be understood as one in a series of attempts to impose a ‘solution’ to the Question of Palestine (Goldberg, 2024).

#### 4.4 International law and the struggle for Palestinian liberation

In this report, we consider international law as ultimately defined by the actions of powerful states and to some extent non-state actors, as a language that abstracts from that living history upon which claims of justice and freedom are based, only to forward and assert through force those arguments which represent (mainly) imperial interest. The fact that the law is a language expressing the interest of powerful states and non-state actors means that it is a poor ground for a politics of freedom. In law, each side to an argument is equally correct. It is the force between them that enlivens the word of law, that *makes right* (Miéville, 2005). That is why we have formulated the demand of this report as one of justice. However, before the strength of the Palestinian resistance—alongside the strength of workers' and national independence movements worldwide—dwindled, it did formulate its demands in the form of law (Erakat, 2019). Palestinian legal scholar Erakat recounts how, prior to the disappointments of the Oslo accords, during the 70s,

the [Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)] advanced a combination of a political program and an aggressive legal strategy. It sought to restore native sovereignty in a single democratic state for all people, and it strategically wielded the law in service of that vision. It successfully inscribed the juridical status of Palestinian peoplehood in legal instruments, crafted an alternative legal framework for peace in place of Security Council Resolution 242 [UN Security Council, 1967], contributed to the creation of new law (Additional Protocol I) where none existed in order to legitimate its use of force, and established that Zionism is a form of racism akin to apartheid. (Erakat, 2019, p. 111).

The PLO's move to assert its embryonic sovereignty did not—at least initially—impinge on the Palestinian right of return: as Erakat writes, "since the PLO sought to establish a Palestinian state over all of Palestine wherein Jews could remain as enfranchised citizens rather than settler sovereigns" (Erakat, 2019, p. 111-112). At that time, when the PLO was strong and anti-imperialist struggles were ascendant worldwide, the PLO mobilized international law to pursue a single, multiethnic, democratic state (Erakat, 2019). To this end, it secured or helped secure the adoption of General Assembly Resolution 3236, which explicitly recognized the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, national independence, and sovereignty; Resolution 3237, which granted the Palestinian people observer status at the UN; and Resolution 3379, which declared Zionism a form of racism, premised on the persecution of the Palestinian people (Erakat, 2019; UNGA, 1974a; 1974b; 1975), though it was later revoked by Resolution 46/86 in 1991 (UNGA, 1992). Resolution 3379 quoted Resolution 77 (XII), adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, stating

that the racist regime in occupied Palestine and the racist regime in Zimbabwe and South Africa have a common imperialist origin, forming a whole and having the same racist structure and being organically linked in their policy aimed at repression of the dignity and integrity of the human being (UNGA, 1975, p. 84).

It also referred to the *Political Declaration and Strategy to Strengthen International Peace and Security and to Intensify Solidarity and Mutual*

*Assistance among Non-Aligned Countries*, adopted at the Conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Non-Aligned Countries, which “most severely condemned Zionism as a threat to world peace and security and called upon all countries to oppose this racist and imperialist ideology” (UNGA, 1975, p. 84).

Around the same time, in 1974, after efforts to expel apartheid South Africa from the United Nations were blocked by vetoes from the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, the General Assembly—by an overwhelming majority—voted to suspend it anyway (Erakat, 2019). The decision ran contrary to the UN Charter at the time but gained legal force through precedent (Erakat, 2019). At that moment, global justice movements were strong enough to shape the development of international law. At the time of writing, while Israel is committing a genocide in real time with near-total impunity, this no longer appears to be the case. One hopes that will change. Until then, universities can at least stand up for the small remnants of justice that persist within the norms of international law.

#### **4.5 The responsibility of Swedish Universities in line with a liberal approach to international law: Between justice and state interests**

When we call on universities to abide by international law, such as that of occupation, we do not mean to ascribe to any political project that international law might be seen to implicate. We simply appeal to that minimum level of ethical responsibility and integrity on the part of universities which certain international legal norms do provide. These international legal norms offer a small window of integrity and justice that universities can choose to protect, notably through compliance with the Genocide and Apartheid Conventions (UNGA, 1948a; 1973). In this section, we urge universities to comply with these conventions. At the same time, we show how, in choosing to disregard these and related conventions, universities are joining Israeli and United States imperialist powers in rendering genocide and apartheid legal. Finally, we urge colleagues, staff and students of Swedish academia, to act and to keep acting in defence of justice and freedom. In failing to resist the security interests of the Swedish state—in aligning themselves and their language with these interests—Swedish universities have also failed to resist undue political influence on academic freedom. In the face of mounting securitization, it is vital that staff and students continue to think and act freely so as to preserve this freedom.

##### **4.5.a Consensus that Israel is committing genocide according to international law**

In a narrow and liberal understanding of the protection afforded by international law, the “crime of apartheid” is defined as “inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them” (UNGA, 1973, Art. 2). Among these inhumane acts, as identified within the afore-mentioned Statute and the Convention, are the “expropriation of landed property”, “forcible transfer”, the “creation of separate reserves and ghettos” and the denial of “the right to leave and to return to their country, [and] the



right to a nationality" (see Human Rights Watch, 2021). In practice, the crime of apartheid thus refers to "the implementation and maintenance of a system of legalized racial segregation in which one racial group is deprived of political and civil rights" (Cornell Law School Legal Information Institute, 2022, para. 1). This is considered a crime against humanity, punishable under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. In 2017, a United Nations report established that Israel maintained an apartheid regime from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea (Falk & Tilley, 2017). Due to pressure from the United States, the report was taken down from the UN website (Erakat, 2019). However, since the crime was constituted, countless organizations and scholars have documented the apartheid nature of Israeli rule over the Palestinian people, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea (Erakat, 2019).

In recent years, several liberal human rights organizations (Human Rights Watch, 2021; B'Tselem, 2021; Amnesty International, 2022a; Yesh Din, 2020; UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 2012) have found that Israel's discriminatory laws and policies effectively constitute an apartheid regime, which differentially treats Palestinians and Israeli Jews, and systematically deprives the former of their rights. Amnesty International (2022a), for instance, already published in 2022 a comprehensive report entitled *Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime Against Humanity*, which set out "how massive seizures of Palestinian land and property, unlawful killings, forcible transfer, drastic movement restrictions, and the denial of nationality and citizenship to Palestinians are all components of a system which amounts to apartheid under international law" (Amnesty International, 2022c, para. 2). These grave violations have only intensified since October 2023.

There has been longstanding legal debate around whether there was a case to be made that Israeli rule and persecution of the Palestinian people *since the start of the Nakba* could constitute a violation of the Genocide Convention (e.g. Boyle, 2003). Others, however, have argued that such crimes instead constituted "ethnic cleansing", which is not in itself defined as a crime in international law (Reidy, 2024) and, as such, may be considered simply a euphemism at best, or a willing obfuscation at worst (Ahmetašević, 2024). Clinging to that distinction as meaningful is even more untenable since the latest phase of Israel's occupation of Palestine and the subsequent atrocities committed by the Israeli military, which have sought to collectively punish the whole Palestinian civilian population and destroy all possibility of life for Palestinians.

As such, on December 29th, 2023, South Africa filed a case with the International Court of Justice, accusing Israel of genocidal acts in Gaza. As part of the ongoing South Africa v. Israel case, two days of public hearings were held on January 11 and 12, 2024, in which the Court ultimately found it to be plausible that Israel's actions in Palestine do amount to genocide.

The UN Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices (2024, p. 24) also found, in a new report released on September 20, 2024, that Israel's warfare in Gaza between October 2023 and July 2024 was "consistent with the characteristics of genocide". The report finds that "since the escalation of the conflict, Israeli officials have publicly supported policies depriving civilians of food, water, and fuel, indicating their intent to instrumentalize the provision of basic necessities for political and military objectives and retribution" (UN

Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices, 2024, pp. 9–10). In October 2024, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese, also published an exhaustive report of “the unfolding horrors in the occupied Palestinian territory” (UNGA, 2024, p. 2). The report proved that Israel’s actions against the near-totality of the Palestinian population were committed with genocidal intent, making clear that

the violence that Israel has unleashed against the Palestinians post-7 October is not happening in a vacuum, but is part of a long-term intentional, systematic, State-organized forced displacement and replacement of the Palestinians ... [which] risks causing irreparable prejudice to the very existence of the Palestinian people in Palestine. (UNGA, 2024, p. 2)

The Special Rapporteur also declared that “Member States must intervene now to prevent new atrocities that will further scar human history” (UNGA, 2024, p. 2).

There is now a general consensus among international human rights organizations that Israel is indeed committing genocide in the occupied Gaza strip. On December 5, 2024, Amnesty International (2024a) published the results of its year-long investigation with the release of the report *‘You Feel Like You Are Subhuman’: Israel’s Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza*. The report concluded that, since October 7th, 2023, “Israel has unleashed hell and destruction on Palestinians in Gaza brazenly, continuously and with total impunity” (Amnesty International, 2024b, para. 2). This led Agnès Callamard, Secretary General of Amnesty International, to assert that: “[The findings] must serve as a wake-up call to the international community: this is genocide. It must stop now” (Amnesty International, 2024b, para. 4). A few days later, the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR, 2024) also reached the conclusion that “there is a legally sound argument that Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza” (para.1). On December 19, 2024, Human Rights Watch also released a report detailing Israel’s intentional deprivation of access to safe water for millions of Palestinians, which concluded that “Israeli authorities are responsible for the crime against humanity of extermination and for acts of genocide” (2024, para. 2). A similar report by Médecins Sans Frontières, released on the same day, led its Secretary General Christopher Lockyear to declare that their medical teams’ descriptions of the facts on the ground were “consistent with the descriptions provided by an increasing number of legal experts and organizations concluding that genocide is taking place in Gaza” (Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), 2024, p. 5).

All these reports were published before Israel imposed a man-made famine on Palestinians after a total aid blockade in March 2025, later replacing the UN aid distribution system with a militarized, deliberately inefficient and cruel one at the hands of the so-called Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF). Through this deadly scheme, Israel has “forc[ed] two million people into overcrowded, militarized zones where they face daily gunfire and mass casualties while trying to access food and are denied other life-saving supplies” (Oxfam International, 2025, para. 4), as denounced by more than 240 NGOs such as Oxfam, Amnesty International, Médecins Sans Frontières, Save the Children, and Act Church of Sweden, in a joint statement demanding the end of this cruel scheme on a population already subjected to forced starvation. In July 2025, an Amnesty



International (2025) report echoed this conclusion, situating this militarized aid distribution system as part of Israel's continued use of starvation as a weapon of war against Palestinians "to deliberately impose conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction as part of its ongoing genocide" (Amnesty International, 2025, para. 1).

This new "system" can only be understood as a new cruel tool of genocide. As Philippe Lazzarini, the UNRWA chief, has said, "th[is] so-called mechanism ... is a death trap costing more lives than it saves" (Ahmed et al., 2025, para. 3).

As such, in July 2025, two major Israeli human rights organizations, B'Tselem and Physicians for Human Rights Israel (PHRI), also jointly concluded that Israel was committing genocide against the Palestinian people (B'Tselem, 2025; PHRI, 2025). PHRI's report (2025) stated:

This is not a temporary crisis. It is a strategy to eliminate the conditions needed for life. Even if Israel stops the offensive today, the destruction it has inflicted guarantees that preventable deaths ... will continue for years. This is not collateral damage. This is not a side effect of war. It is the systematic creation of unlivable conditions. It is the denial of survivability. It is a genocide. (para. 4)

In response to the horrific disregard for human life and deliberate dehumanisation of Palestinians, B'Tselem called on the international community "to act urgently to put an immediate stop to Israel's assault on the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and across all areas under Israeli control, using every means available under international law" (B'Tselem, 2025, p. 9).

In September 2025, the UN Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel concluded that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza, by committing four of the five genocidal acts under the Genocide Convention (Keaten, 2025).

#### 4.5.b The responsibility of Swedish universities to uphold international law

Even on a narrow doctrinal reading, the evidence for genocide and apartheid is overwhelming. At this point, we could draw the conclusion that the problem is a lack of enforcement of international law, permitting the continuance of atrocity. But the issue is deeper and more troubling than this.

As described earlier in this section, the standard "enforcement gap" story misdescribes how international law works: In international law, there is no external sovereign; hence international law lives and develops squarely in the concrete actions of states and to some extent non-state actors, including public institutions (who are, as such, bound by international law). As long as Sweden does not enforce the prohibition of apartheid, Swedish universities are among those domestic actors able (in being bound by international law) to protect the integrity of these norms—by refusing complicity and severing formal academic ties.

Universities therefore face a clear choice. They can uphold the minimal protections international law still affords Palestinians under the Genocide Convention (UNGA, 1948a), the Apartheid Convention (UNGA, 1973), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (UNGA, 1965), and the right to self-determination as enshrined in the UN Charter. Or they can do nothing, allowing their inaction to become practice that normalizes non-enforcement, effectively participating in the legalization of genocide and apartheid. With this report, we urge Swedish academia to choose the former, while remaining sober about the current capacity of our universities to advance freedom and justice.

In our last report (WASSAP, 2024), based on universities' responses to staff and students calling for an academic boycott, we showed how Swedish academia—caught in an ever tighter securitization framework—swiftly ceded academic freedom to the discretion of Sweden's geopolitical security interests. We also showed how this retreat was papered over by an understanding of academic freedom so narrow as to be almost absurd: complicity by university staff and students in the ongoing Palestinian genocide and scholasticide was treated as an acceptable price for the supposed right of individual researchers to do whatever they wish for whatever reason they deem fitting.

Protecting individual researchers from state interference can matter, especially when resisting demands to sever ties with states deemed security risks. But this does not foreclose the protection of academic freedom in its institutional and global dimensions, or of the protection of fundamental rights within the same securitizing drift. In fact, by demanding a boycott of Israeli higher education, we are in the same way demanding the protection of researchers from state interference and securitization—attempting to shield these researchers and students, to shield ourselves, from enforced complicity in apartheid and genocide. Crucially, academic freedom requires institutional autonomy and a duty on universities to ensure freedom from censorship and control, safeguarding critical inquiry even when it departs from official state positions or other external authorities (Butler, 2017). Notably, the Swedish Higher Education Authority (2024) report identified political and administrative control as the greatest threat to academic freedom.

The continuing failure to defend academic freedom suggests that vice chancellors are unwilling to uphold sound scholarship, ethical integrity, and academic freedom in the face of scholasticide and apartheid. Instead, they are seemingly constrained by bureaucratic caution, intensifying securitization, and governmental pressure; lacking the courage to act independently. Therefore, we urge our colleagues—staff and students alike—to act, or at least to speak and to keep speaking. In speaking and acting, we defend the right to speak and act in ways that have been politicized, marginalized, and repressed since universities publicly aligned themselves with state security priorities. By failing to resist the securitization of academia, Swedish universities have invited securitization and the repression of free thought and debate.



# Section 5:

## How to carry out a boycott in practice

## 5.1 Clarification on the meaning of boycott

Boycotting, as described in this report and the context of academia, is a tool that ensures an institution upholds the democratic values of education and research. As mentioned in this report, some of these values and research ethics, according to Sveriges universitets- och högskoleförbund (SUHF), The Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions, need to be checked when setting up or reviewing a collaboration with a foreign institution. These guidelines include information about what behavior is problematic and unacceptable for ethical collaboration, and include among others: the restriction of democratic freedom and rights by the institution (e.g. Bar-Ilan), documented violations of human rights or academic freedom (e.g. University of Haifa), the potential misuse of the data or obvious unintended applications (e.g. Ben-Gurion University). Further, some universities have an association with an actor within or closely linked to armed forces or the defence industry or a partner violating human rights (e.g. The Open University of Israel, Ben-Gurion University), which are also problematic according to SUHF guidelines. Additionally, other universities have a collaboration that would expose staff, partner colleagues or students to increased personal risk related to areas such as terror threats, espionage, or information theft. It is undeniable that Swedish universities have collaborations with universities that are in clear violation of the ethical guidelines put forward by SUHF (SUHF, 2023).

In the face of grave violations of ethics and basic human rights, a boycott is a non-violent and necessary tool that constitutes a “bare minimum” of what individuals and institutions can do to uphold their ethics and values, which already proved effective in helping to topple the apartheid regime in South Africa.

However, over the past two years multiple members of WASSAP have engaged with university authorities, academic colleagues, the media, and came across a genuine misunderstanding or willing obfuscation of what a boycott is, or what such a practice entails. As such, we provide in this section some clarifications in this regard.

Expressions of support for “openness” and supporting “the international academic community” are meaningless if they are not backed by action and centered in justice. That community is formed of singular actors, and those actors can only act within the limits set by their institutions.

It has been mentioned to us at many talks that a boycott would risk the academic freedom of Israeli academics working in Israel. Academic boycott does not aim to target Israeli academics themselves. It is an international demand, concerned with the relation between Swedish universities and the State of Israel and institutions it funds. Our demand is that universities in Sweden take steps to distance themselves from a regime that clearly violates academic freedom, educational ethics, and international law (see <https://wassap.se/> for a list of all the places and institutions that have vast archives of evidence of this).

Furthermore, related to the previous point, Israel's far-right, ethnonationalist regime silences any dissenting voices in its universities: dozens of academics have been fired or disciplined for expressing disagreement with the genocide. A boycott means Swedish universities expressing an explicit refusal to engage

with universities that silence and punish their staff for criticizing the state. This would allow critical Israeli scholarship, not silence it. Moreover, Palestinian students are subject to a system of extreme brutality at Israeli universities. For example, at Haifa University, over 80% of students brought to disciplinary tribunals are Palestinians with Israeli citizenship. Israeli universities are apartheid universities; they are not democratic institutions (Sa'di, 2014).

Academic freedom can never be absolute with being centered in justice. In order to establish an ethical standard of freedom, a system based on mutual justice among members of society needs to be upheld. Universities are full of these kinds of limitations on "freedom" in order to uphold a just academic and educational environment. Staff and students, for example, are not allowed to use racist or otherwise offensive language; we are prohibited from engaging in abusive behaviors towards others. Freedom becomes privilege if it is not conditional on protecting others from harm.

In order for academics in Sweden to have academic freedom, the institutions we work for must not make us complicit in war crimes and crimes against humanity through institutional collaborations.

## 5.2 BDS implementation

It is important for different individuals to learn how boycotting can take place in the context of their studies, research or work. Students, researchers, and administrative staff in the educational sector cannot escape collaborating with their counterparts in other universities and countries.

In this section, we briefly present some practical tools to help individuals working or studying at educational institutions to exercise their right to conduct research and learn in an environment that prioritizes freedom of education for all beyond the Swedish borders, and places ethical collaboration and engagement in academic institutions at the center of their work. This includes boycotting and cutting ties with institutions in other countries that infringe on the ethical considerations listed above in SUHF's checklist for Global Responsible Engagement. In the context of Israeli institutions, this report has documented how said universities are actively engaged in militarized activities and war crimes committed in Palestine. As a result, the practices below are specifically designed for Israeli institutions, but they can be used in a broader sense to limit collaborations with any global institution that infringes on universal human rights.

### 5.2.a For researchers

For those working independently or within joint projects, researchers have an obligation to maintain ethical and moral practices in the way they conduct research and collaborate with others. Ethical contributions to science and academia do not know borders. As a result, researchers in Sweden have an obligation to ensure their contributions are not benefiting from the suffering, abuse or dehumanization of others, even if these issues take place outside of

the Swedish border. While this is important for studies in social science and humanities, it is equally important in STEM studies. Technologies, especially in fields which tangent the defence industry, have an obligation to employ the same ethical standards.

**Collaborations:**

Decline joint research projects, partnerships, or funding from institutions or companies linked to Israel's military-industrial complex, apartheid, or human rights abuses in Palestine. Establish ties with Palestinian scholarship, especially within institutions that had been subjected to repression and exclusion from international collaborations in the past.

**Publishing:**

Avoid submitting to or peer-reviewing for academic journals funded by or supported in any way by Israeli Institutions that are complicit in the apartheid system, occupation of Palestinian territories, or military operations against Palestinians.

**Conferences and affiliations:**

Boycott conferences hosted by institutions, companies or organizations in Israel. Avoid affiliations with Israeli institutions built on occupied land, benefiting from occupation or the apartheid regime.

**Cited sources:**

Ensure that any academic texts cited have not benefited from the Israeli system of illegal settlements, apartheid, or universal human rights abuses. An alternative could be the works of Palestinian scholarship. For example, Salim Tamari, Khaled Hroub, Nur Masalha, Houria Bouteldja, Nada Elia, Rashid Khalidi, Ilan Pappé, Avi Shlaim, Noam Chomsky, and many more.

**5.2.b For lecturers**

Lecturers have a responsibility as educators to ensure that students engage with a critical curriculum that highlights injustices, rather than obscure them or avoid confrontation with critical narratives.

**Critical Curriculum:**

Include materials, textbooks, or case studies that employ a critical view of colonial regimes, and exclude those produced in institutions that benefit from colonial and apartheid regimes in Palestine and whitewashes abuses by the Israeli government. The history of Palestine is rich with various political, social, technological accounts that can expose the students to one of the most significant decolonial case studies of our time. This is also applicable to natural sciences.

**Teacher mobility:**

Suspend academic exchange programs and teaching mobility in Israeli universities. Initiate alternative programs with Palestinian universities or at institutions outside of Palestine that are not complicit with Israeli abuses in Palestine.



**Speaker's boycott:**

Refuse or disinvite scholars who are complicit with abuses of international law that benefit the Israeli occupations, apartheid regime, and war crimes.

**5.2.c For students**

Students have an obligation to engage critically with the educational material they are presented with and utilize their power as outlined in Section 4a - Chapter 1 in the Swedish Higher Education Act, which enables them to "exert influence over the courses and study programmes at higher education institutions" (Swedish Council for Higher Education, 1992, p. 1434).

**Critical Curriculum:**

Engage with the course instructors on the literature list, and exercise your right to use critical material which employs a decolonial and anti-colonial discourse to the question of Palestine and the Middle East as a whole. In natural sciences, encourage the use of alternative research material and case studies that are not created within institutions that benefit from the Israeli occupation, apartheid regime, and war crimes.

**Exchange and study abroad:**

Avoid going on exchanges abroad at Israeli institutions that are complicit in abuses of International law or benefit the Israeli occupation, its apartheid regime or its military's war crimes against Palestinians (as well as against Lebanese, Yemeni, and Syrian people).

**Student councils:**

Provide support for Palestinian students by critically engaging with issues that concern their safety with the Swedish university setting, their academic freedom, and their basic rights to knowledge production and knowledge sharing within the student councils and associations.

**5.2.d For administrative staff****Ethical procurement:**

Ensure that the list of vendors from which the university purchases products does not include Israeli vendors or service providers that benefit from Occupied Palestinian land, stolen property, illegal settlements. For example, HP, Microsoft, and Volvo (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2025). This also includes not allowing complicit companies in events such as career fairs and other networking events hosted by universities. The BDS movement website provides resources on some of these companies, but some additional details can be found through Investigate—An Economic Activism Program of the American Friends Service Committee (<https://investigate.afsc.org/>).

The BDS Movement website (BDS Movement, n.d.) provides a comprehensive guide dedicated to academic boycott and additional resources for an effective boycott campaign.

#### 5.2.e How long will the boycott last?

The fight for equality from the river to the sea in historic Palestine and the freedom of the Palestinian people is a long one. According to the founder of The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, Omar Barghouti, a full cultural and economic boycott of Israel should be maintained until Israel fully complies with International law and upholds human rights principles which apply equally between all citizens regardless of their faith, ethnic background, or colour of their skin (BDS, 2014). Equal rights and justice in the region means the dismantling of apartheid, inequality, and Jewish supremacy in the land.

**Conclusion:  
The need for  
Swedish universities  
to stand for justice  
in academia and  
against apartheid  
and genocide**

This report provides Swedish universities with the historical, legal, ethical, and critical foundations that both justify and obligate them to (1) terminate all formal collaborations with Israeli universities and other complicit institutions, (2) establish collaborations with Palestinian universities, and (3) uphold the freedoms of assembly and speech for academic workers and students, with special attention to discussions related to Palestine. It also emphasizes the Zionist and imperialist tradition of violence and destruction, a tradition in which Swedish universities are complicit, and which they will continue to perpetuate absent clear action. As we have shown in this report, at the bare minimum, the apartheid regime imposed upon the Palestinian people, alongside the current, ongoing genocide in Gaza demands that universities in Sweden actively stand for justice and against genocide.

We build upon and expand the findings and arguments from our first report (WASSAP, 2024). Though we must be encouraged by the few successes in pushing Swedish academic institutions to sever their ties with complicit Israeli universities, and which are the result of unrelenting efforts by university staff, students, and civil society who wish our universities to stop their complicity in genocide, their scale is still wholly insufficient given the magnitude of the ongoing devastation.

In the historical overview, we showed how the Zionist project, bolstered by British and later American imperialist ambitions, first resulted in the Nakba against Palestinians and eventually crystallized into the creation of an apartheid regime that has explicitly enshrined racism and discrimination at the highest level of the law. Israeli universities were and are, from their foundation, a crucial part of the Zionist project, directly contributing towards the refusal of Palestinian self-determination and return. As long as Swedish universities keep supporting these Israeli universities through their institutional collaborations, they remain complicit in this legacy.

We detailed how these Israeli institutions of higher education are actively supporting Israeli military forces and contributing to the oppression of Palestinians and genocide being committed against them, and described the active ties between Swedish universities and complicit Israeli institutions. Furthermore, we showed that Swedish universities have not been neutral actors, and have instead actively obstructed our attempts to establish academic collaborations with Palestinian universities and our attempts to protest and highlight the general inaction, silence, and complicity of our universities.

An overwhelming number of international non-governmental organizations describe the apartheid regime and genocide in Palestine as such. Numerous decisions and resolutions by the United Nations and by the International Court of Justice also stress the apartheid nature of the Israeli regime, the illegality of occupation and settlement, and the Palestinian right of return and right to self-determination. Still, we also provided an account of how international law has enabled and facilitated injustice against the Palestinian people, for example, by displacing questions of justice within a framework of humanitarianism. This account shows how Israel and its allies have instrumentalized international law to dispossess Palestinians, including how Swedish universities mirror the US and Israeli framing and response to the ongoing genocide. Moreover, it shows how categories of international law are structurally unfit to remedy colonial and settler-colonial injustice. We also showed how Palestinian liberation movements

have historically mobilized international law in the name of justice. Finally, we demand universities to stand by what little space international legal norms still provide for justice, and for the protection of dignity and life: notably, to act in accordance with the Genocide and Apartheid Conventions (UNGA, 1948a; 1973). We note, however, that no Swedish university has chosen to do so. The abandonment of academic freedom and ethical responsibility in the name of Swedish "security interests" have had profoundly negative consequences for the conditions of free thought and debate within our universities.

There is no lack of opportunity for Swedish universities to act. At the bare minimum, we implore universities to honor their responsibilities according to the Genocide and Apartheid conventions, and to cut all formal ties with Israeli universities to this aim. In not honoring these responsibilities, however, and in framing the Israeli apartheid regime in terms of a war between two equal sides, Swedish universities are directly part of the reformulation of international law, contributing to the further marginalization of justice and integrity. Crucially, this leads to the forced complicity of staff and students, in apartheid, genocide, and the erasure of Palestinian life. This complicity amounts to upholding apartheid and genocide as acceptable in a new, more oppressive international legal framework.

We have provided suggestions for the implementation of an academic boycott of Israeli institutions as a way (which has already proven effective in helping to topple the South African apartheid) to increase the international pressure on them to end their complicity and active aiding of the genocide and apartheid regime. A boycott is a non-violent and necessary tool that demands Swedish universities take meaningful steps to sever their ties with Israeli academic institutions, as long as those institutions continue to deny Palestinians their right to self-determination and return. It does not, however, target individual Israeli researchers *per se* if they are not complicit in the current injustice. Such a commitment would demand that Swedish universities protect academic freedom everywhere by asking them to express an explicit refusal to engage with universities that silence and punish their staff, and the staff of other universities, for criticizing the state. Finally, we have included specific practical suggestions for researchers, lecturers, students, and administrative staff who wish to know how to implement an effective academic boycott at their level.

So far, Swedish universities have not enacted an academic boycott, but students, workers, and staff within academia continue to push our universities to act. At the same time, we take it upon ourselves to enact an academic boycott in the ways that are currently available to us. The BDS movement has been ongoing for two decades, and one cannot help but wonder if earlier action might have helped avert some of today's horrors. Listening to the calls of Palestinian colleagues, such as those involved in the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) initiative, and engaging in honest, difficult conversations, can break the suffocating silence. By at least adhering to the minimal standards set by peremptory norms of international law, the same norms that underpin the PACBI call, universities may finally bring academia closer to the goal of supporting the ending of apartheid in Israel and Palestine. It is not too late to practice the intellectual autonomy and ethical conduct that universities claim to be constituted and guided by. It is now up to the universities to prove that they genuinely embody the open and democratic spaces they claim to be. We implore our universities to stand for justice, justice for all and everywhere, even when our own governments may fail to do so.

As students and staff at Swedish universities, we demand our own universities to take concrete action. Often, those in the future look back on history and ask: "Why didn't people do more to end these atrocities?". And today, some wonder: "Well, what can I do in the face of such violence?". To an increasing number of us all over the world, the answer is clear. Now is the moment to act. We recognize that the actions we demand of Swedish universities today are only one small part of the larger movement for Palestine, but we nonetheless are empowered by the fact that it is within our power as workers, academics, and students in Swedish academia to engage in an academic boycott. Our demands to our universities remain, but we also reach out to those within Swedish academia, who perhaps have thus far remained silent or unsure. We are also speaking to you. We implore you, together with us, to take concrete action for Palestine in our shared university life today.

Believing in the power and emancipatory potential of higher education, we, Workers and Students in Swedish Academia for Palestine (WASSAP), demand that Swedish universities end their complicity in the Israeli apartheid regime, scholasticide, and genocide, and stand for justice by fulfilling these *inseparable* demands:

1. Ending all formal collaborations with Israeli universities and other complicit institutions, in accordance with the PACBI guidelines;
2. Establishing collaborations with Palestinian universities, including providing meaningful support to displaced Palestinian academics and students, offering them a place to study and work at Swedish universities;
3. Upholding the freedoms of assembly and speech for academic workers and students, with special attention to discussions related to Palestine. Opposing the systemic censoring and underfunding of pro-Palestine groups both in academia and in general.

WASSAP,  
Sweden,  
October 2025

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