



SPEAK OUT

Speeches of academics in public rallies
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Academics for a Democratic Israel
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NO ACADEMIA WITHOUT DEMOCRACY

Amplifying Voices for Change: Israeli Academia Unites Against Detrimental Reforms

On the evening of Saturday, April 29, 2023, the united force of Israeli academia reverberated across the nation, resonating from Eilat to Kiryat Shmona, as scholars from all fields stood tall in demonstrations against the legal “reforms.” This unprecedented mobilization held tremendous significance, for academic discourse finds its essence in critical thinking and impassioned debates. The resounding consensus that emerged within academia is a testament to the grave concerns shared by scholars – not solely for academia’s welfare but for the very fabric of Israeli society.

This resolute stand, borne by individuals whose very occupation demands doubt, meticulous scrutiny, and the profound exploration of facts and their implications, marks a moment of profound consequence. In a remarkable display of unity, diverse viewpoints and ideological orientations converge, and while disagreements are inevitable, the conviction prevails that only through rigorous examination of facts and critical thinking can resolutions be reached.

However, Israel has not remained impervious to the surge of populism, causing a concerning erosion of the value of factual evidence in public discourse. In place of solid truths, a tide of “alternative facts” has swept in, concealing its weaknesses behind a cacophony of voices and opinions. The dismissive treatment of substantiated views from experts in law, political science, economics, and various other disciplines reflects a worrisome trend. Instead of evaluating positions based on justifications and truths, a divisive “with us or against us” mentality prevails.

Thus, we step forward, resolute in our demonstration, to underscore that the coalition’s proposals rest solely on the desires of its proponents, devoid of substantial basis.

As the academy takes its place at the forefront of the protest movement, we highlight the indispensable role it plays in shaping the character and values of society. Beyond academia’s intrinsic worth, its contributions extend to bolstering the state’s prosperity and democratic framework. The Israeli economy, legal system, healthcare, education, culture, art, architecture, and security are interwoven with the groundbreaking, challenging, and comprehensive research that academia fosters. As an additional “branch” of power critique and reliable information, academia safeguards and reinforces democratic principles and the checks and balances within the state.

With unwavering vocal clarity, we declare that the liberal-democratic spirit, encapsulating the freedom of thought and production, breathes life into academia and the state. Flourishing within a democratic-egalitarian environment, where truth holds paramount importance and critical questions are encouraged, academia thrives. This vision serves as the guiding light for Israeli academia, open to valid suggestions for improvement but steadfastly rejecting any plans to undermine its essence.

In fulfillment of our civic obligation, we pledge to utilize all scientific tools at our disposal to defend democracy vehemently. This noble pursuit includes combating alternative truths, incitement, manipulation, and falsehoods.

Indeed, democracy and academia are inseparable, bound together by a symbiotic relationship. Just as there can be no democracy without academia, the vitality of academia finds its roots in the nurturing embrace of a vibrant democracy. Together, we stand for a brighter, enlightened future, united in purpose and resolute in our quest for positive change.

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This is an interactive brochure. All the speeches, including more photos and videos, appear on the Facebook page of the academics against judicial reforms. The QR code at the top of each public address can be scanned or clicked to reach the online version. Clicking on one of the icons in the table of contents will lead to the corresponding address, and you can return to it from any page by clicking on the small icon shaped like a house surrounding the page number.

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EILAT

Prof. Yeala Shaked The Hebrew University & the Inter-University
Institute for Marine Sciences in Eilat



Good evening, Eilatians. Good evening, partners.

My name is Yeala Shaked, and I am a professor of Marine Sciences at the Hebrew University.

I am here as part of the “No Academia Without Democracy” project. Tonight, in a clear voice, the leaders of higher education in Israel and senior scholars in the sciences and the humanities are speaking at 35 protest centers around the country, calling to stop the regime coup and strengthen Israeli democracy.

I am here tonight because I have been living in Eilat and studying our remarkable sea for 20 years now. During this time, I have taught hundreds of students and worked to strengthen scientific research and teaching in the periphery.

I am here tonight to protest against a government which is working to weaken the judicial system in order to undermine the fundamental democratic values of the State of Israel. It is a government that seeks to harm equality and civil rights and that perceives higher education, freedom of expression, and freedom of the press as a threat.

I am here tonight to protest against and warn about the heavy-handed legislation, the corruption, the sectoral state budget, and the unbridled incitement by the government. It is a government that calls us an elite out of contempt and fear, instead of investing in education and higher education in the periphery for the benefit of all.

Independent thought, freedom of speech, pluralistic education, creativity, and transparency are the most effective immunizing factors against dictatorship. As these elements are among the cornerstones of a thriving academia, there can be



no academia without democracy.

Knowledge is power, and education is a lever for individual development and national growth. A government that grants vast funding to institutions that oppose core studies is condemning an entire sector to ignorance and poverty and dragging down the whole country.

In the absence of natural resources and mineral deposits, Israel’s primary resource is education – an engine for creativity, broadening horizons, and integration. Yes, integration. In the different positions I have held over the years, I have worked for the advancement of women and other minorities in academia, and my university makes great efforts to encourage education in disadvantaged populations and to implement unique programs for ultraorthodox Jews and East Jerusalem Arabs. But all of this is now at risk, because education and academic research can only thrive in a free, pluralistic, and democratic society.

We are therefore playing for all the marbles, because there can be no academia without democracy. And without academia, education, research, and development,

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EILAT

there can be no economy, no healthcare, and no security.

To counter the hatred, the lies, the polarization, and the incitement, we must emphasize friendship and solidarity and act together by way of protest, dialogue, civil diplomacy, and education of the next generation.

Instead of giving up in despair, let us imagine a different future and work for a comprehensive social and political framework in our shared homeland – one that will guarantee democracy, peace, equal opportunity, education, and social justice for all.



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ASHDOD

Prof. Meir Feder Tel Aviv University



The State of Israel is a miracle, a dream of generations come true. I am especially pleased to be this evening in Ashdod, which is its own miracle – a microcosm

of Israeli society, or, to use the words of Amos Oz, “a city on a human scale on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea.”

The demonstration here is more important than the demonstration on Kaplan Street!

Over the past few decades, Ashdod, along with the rest of the state of Israel, has benefited from another miracle: the high-tech revolution – the startup nation that in recent years has become an advanced high-tech economy. The high-tech revolution is critical for the prosperity and the security of the state of Israel, as reflected in the areas of cyber, the Iron Dome, the technologically-superior Israeli Air Force, advanced medicine, and more.

This miracle is the result of a unique combination between a strong academia, technological units within the defense forces, and top talent – talent that exists and must be nurtured throughout all of society – in the country’s center, in the periphery, among ultraorthodox Jews, and among the Arabs. It has been the result of these factors, in conjunction with available funding and a stable economy that is based on a strong, independent legal system!

As we all know and can feel, all of this is now in clear and present danger. We have learned from Hungary and Poland that without democracy there can be no academia and no free thought. Without an independent legal system, there can be no investment and no high-tech. There are already signs of this. Destruction will certainly

follow if the regime coup materializes!

The Prime Minister knows all of this. He has been advised to this effect by the top economists, Nobel Prize laureates and others, including those who are loyal to him. The signs are clear, but the Prime Minister is up to his neck in his own legal troubles and is a prisoner of a horrific coalition of the ultraorthodox parties and the settlers, who are demanding discriminatory laws. Apart from those, there are also the simple sense of arrogance and desire for revenge. So, let’s just cancel democracy.

And as if taken from the dictator’s manual, they will not be satisfied with only the destruction of the legal system. Yariv Levin has already said (and I quote): “We also want a different academia. The appointment of judges by the coalition is only the first stage. The next stage will be the appointment of professors.” And this, indeed, is what is happening. As a faculty member, I have long felt the scare campaigns of the fascist organization “Im Tirtzu.” They hate every place where there is free thinking!

This is not surprising. It happened in Hungary; it happened in Turkey; and it happened in Poland, and I do not want to even mention worse places.

What is maddening is the fact that this is all happening when there are indications of a global economic crisis. The cost of living, the difficult security situation... And Iran – Iran is becoming a nuclear power before our eyes. And this is what we’re dealing with?

I am happy that not all is dark... Fortunately, another miracle has occurred. In their madness and their arrogance, they have caused an extreme crisis and, in doing so, sparked unprecedented protest – protest that has

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swept us all for 17 weeks, an inspiring protest with a wave of blue and white flags.

Make no mistake. You and the protests are the only reason why the Minister of Defense was ultimately not fired in the dead of night, and why the coup legislation is now on hold!

And another thing happened: the extreme [government] measures and, in reaction, the magnificent awakening, led to the recognition that it is not enough to compromise on the Judges' Appointment Committee, and not even achievement of full cancellation of the coup legislation. We need to reach a new and profound contract between the state of Israel and its citizens – one that solidifies the Israeli democracy in the spirit of the Declaration of Independence, the spirit that brought about the establishment of the state.

The significant success of the protest so far should not make us complacent. We are at a critical juncture. They have not given up their destructive revolutionary dream, and we are still on the verge of becoming a dictatorship, in which laws can be passed immediately. We heard Yariv Levin at the demonstration in Jerusalem, Amsalem, and others. We saw them trampling on the pictures of Supreme Court judges, like dictatorships do.

It is clear to us that Israel's democracy can easily fall if we do not protect it, and, moreover, if we do not fortify it. This is now the task at hand.

If I may, I would like to add something in conclusion: we need to work hard for the protest movement to reach new audiences. At the demonstrations of the right wing, we heard expressions of feelings of insult and exclusion. Although these feelings have been fueled by

the incessant incitement of politicians from the coalition, I am sorry to say that they contain a grain of truth. We must reach – and integrate into the protest and the Israeli miracle – our brothers in the periphery and in the development towns; the moderate settlers in Judea and Samaria, who understand the damage and the tragedy being caused by the measures taken by the government; the Arab public; and those ultraorthodox Jews who value the Jewish People, who study the tradition, and remember Bar Kamsa and the events which led to destruction in the past. They are our brothers and sisters.

With such a protest movement and such lofty goals, we will prevail. We will prevail because we have no other choice. We will prevail, because ain lanu erez aheret (we have no other country)!



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BE'ER
SHEVE

Prof. Avishay Braverman Ben Gurion University in the Negev



Good evening Negev

residents, as you fight for our future and the future of our children. Thank you! I am very excited to be here.

In 1990, I came to Beer Sheva from the World Bank in Washington to serve as president of the university. I was told there could never be an excellent university here and to forget about it. But we, a group of people who had adopted the vision of a large excellent university, with a technology park, that would open its doors to the entire population of the Negev, were hugely successful.

What was our secret? We came from all ethnic origins and from all social strata, with a feeling of trust and mutual respect, integrity, and a goal. We succeeded beyond our wildest dreams.

On the university's 30th anniversary, we hung posters on the walls of the university Senate building quoting the words of David Ben-Gurion: "It is in the Negev that the people of Israel will be tested," and the "the state of Israel will prove itself not by material wealth, not by military might or technical achievement, but by its moral character and human values." What is its moral character today?

Based on my vast experience working as an economist in many countries around the world, I tell you that without morality, without courts, without professional civil servants who are committed to integrity and ethics, who are loyal not only to the boss, to the dictator, what we will have here is economic ruin.

You don't have to be a professor of economics to see the economic collapse that has already begun, from the high-tech growth engine, to



foreign investments, to the signals of the credit rating agencies. If the regime overturn from democracy to dictatorship happens, the first to pay the heavy price of the economic disaster will be you – the residents of the periphery. And they will blame us, the protesters, for it!! Which is a downright lie!!

A leadership that has veered off the straight and narrow path has dragged us down into an economic crisis within a period of just a few months. The games of halting and resuming the legislation, and meaningless compromises, will change nothing.

The universities are the jewel in the crown of the State of Israel when it comes to technological, scientific, and human development. In recent months, young scientists are deciding not to return to Israel, and many are seeking their future across the sea.

There can be no academia without democracy!

If we give up on democracy and the government interferes boorishly in academia, Israel's universities and colleges will be mortally wounded. Their standard will drop, international funding will be hard to get, and donations from foreign philanthropists will decline

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dramatically. After all, these funds were raised for the vision of a democratic Jewish state, a model society!!

I accuse Binyamin Netanyahu of laying waste to all that has been built here – to the Zionist miracle – based on personal interests. What took decades to build, can quickly be destroyed.

On Thursday, I watched the images coming from Jerusalem, of the Minister of Justice leading his followers in trampling on photographs of Supreme Court justices. Is this the Judaism of the Chosen People?

The Judaism and the Jewish heritage on which I was raised adhered firmly to integrity, respect, education, and culture. This was prescribed by the great minds of Ashkenazi and Sephardic Judaism. And now? Now, the Minister of National Security is a criminal who did not serve in the I.D.F.

Have we become like Sodom and Gomorrah?!

But an even more disgraceful question is: Who was responsible for the appointment of this minister?! Binyamin Netanyahu, in a non-Zionist act, that severely undermines our national security and our standing in the world. An act motivated solely by personal interests, that does damage to the State of Israel, and that benefits no one but Netanyahu.

I accuse government ministers from the Likud party, who understand the danger of the destruction at our doorstep but are taking no steps to stop it. Today, it is their Zionist duty, their duty to national security, to the economy, and above all their moral duty to break the silence and protect the State of Israel, which is falling into oblivion.

Today, it is the duty of every mayor and every public servant, from across the political spectrum, to join us in the protest in an effort to stop this madness and restore sanity to Israel.

Many nations the world over live under dictatorship. But not here! As a nation of young people like you and older people like me coming together – we will not give up!

Democracy and equality for all citizens of the Negev and all citizens of Israel!

The values of the Declaration of Independence!

We will not allow Israel to become a Third World country, the lowest of nations!

We will overcome. We will be victorious in our struggle over the character and the face of the State of Israel. From the south, good fortune shall break forth!



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GIV'ATAYIM

Prof. Dror Wahrman The Academic College of Tel Aviv-Yafo



Good evening Givatayim residents,

My name is Dror Wahrman, and I am the President of the Academic College of Tel Aviv-Yafo. I am here tonight as part of the deployment of academic faculty members around the country to talk about the dangers that the regime coup pose to Israeli academia, and to explain the slogan on my t-shirt:

“No academia without democracy.”

I would like to begin with a simple question: How can one know that a protest is effective? For example, how can we know that our demonstrations against the regime coup are effective? We know, because those against whom the protest is directed want to suppress it (remember Ben-Gvir, the horses, and the stun grenades, here in Givatayim)! They discover that they cannot suppress it, but they want to, and that's how we know that the protest is effective.

Likewise, how do we know that free academia gets in the way of dictators? We know this because we see that suppressing academia is – always – a critical step for authoritarian governments.

The truth is that Netanyahu's story is a long and old one that began during his first terms in office. It is a long story that I know first-hand. I taught abroad for many years – not because I wanted to, but because of the period during which Netanyahu and his right-wing government already tried to harm academia. Why? Because even then, he had anti-liberal authoritarian tendencies, and academia is a liberal stronghold, both in Israel and around the world.

The process led by the right wing in the 1990s –

cutting back about 900 positions within Israeli academia – was the equivalent of closing down an entire university. And then Netanyahu's advisors explained to him that the long-term damage of the cutback would be immense, and would damage one of Israel's distinct and perhaps greatest advantage – the human advantage.

This was a time when Netanyahu was managing things correctly; he also understood the issue and therefore changed direction. He increased the budgets of the universities, enabling me, for example, to return to Israel, shortly before the collapse of the humanities, and, as dean of humanities, to succeed in rebuilding the field and the faculty. He also supported the revolution of the colleges, which were established in Israel in the 1990s and greatly expanded the world of academia in the country. Today, I am the president of a college, and I can offer first-person testimony that the colleges are the greatest success of the Council for Higher Education, which is of course supported and funded by the state.

So what's the problem? Well, academia is still largely liberal and always will be. For the anti-liberal coalition that hates free speech and free thinking, academia is a true thorn in their side. Academia's influence is not as direct as that of the legal system, which they must destroy first. However, there is no doubt that we are the next in line.

Academia encourages freedom of thought. Academia provokes criticism and challenges standard ways of thinking. Academia encourages equal access to higher education – equality between men and women, equality for minorities. Academia aims for the truth

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GIV'ATAYIM

and is naturally opposed to lies, half-truths, and fake news. Academia is geared toward analyzing processes and assessing their causes and their results. It is no coincidence that dictatorial regimes are horrified by all these attributes of academia.

I myself am a historian: history is the discipline which constantly compares historical situations and identifies parallel factors – for example, comparisons between what is happening now in Hungary, Turkey, and Poland, or comparisons between what is going on today in Israel and what went on in Germany in the 1930s. If I do not do so, I would be betraying my professional duty.

Therefore, in conclusion, I would like to give you one example of something that is happening right now, something in which friends of mine are involved and which is harming them – the events of the past decade in Hungary. The threat to Israeli academia posed by the current government, the coalition agreements on which it is based, and the regime coup it is trying to impose on us are all very similar to what occurred in Hungary.

In Hungary, after the elimination of judicial review, it was impossible to stop the following measures:

The regime prohibited teaching and research in certain fields. For example, gender studies for academic credit were prohibited, without any discussion or ability to object.

The regime led to the expulsion of an important European university that was not subject to government supervision (to maintain its academic freedom, it relocated to Vienna... I brought an Israeli faculty member from there to our college).

The regime began to intervene in the decision on which articles will be published, in an effort to prevent the publication of critical articles (the means of pressure in this case was the termination of high level appointments of the people who published such articles).

The regime cut back the resources of the existing institutions for higher education and transferred them to new institutions run by cronies serving the ideological and political agenda of the regime. One example [in Hungary] is Mathias Corvinus Collegium, which would be the equivalent of granting a huge budget to Kohelet Forum to open a university.

Recently, Orbán also enacted a law according to which the government appoints the universities' executive committee. The result was immediate: the European Union prohibited collaboration with Hungarian institutions of higher education [30 institutions in Hungary (21 universities and 9 colleges)], and cancelled their eligibility for research grants. In practice, this is a boycott by the European Union.

In our case, the seeds of all of these processes and more – like the dismissal of disobedient lecturers, or the setting of alternative criteria for professional certification, for example, of physical therapists, in ultraorthodox institutions – are already included in the coalition agreements.

Under no circumstances can they be allowed to win. Because there can be no academia without democracy, and there can be no excellence without academia.

And there can be no prosperous Israel (and perhaps no Israel at all) without its academic excellence.

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GIV'AT
SHMUEL

Prof. Avi Zadok Bar-Ilan University



Ladies and gentlemen, neighbors, friends, religious and secular, right-wing and left-wing, and this entire wonderful crowd that holds the State of Israel dear,

good evening.

Tomorrow the summer session of the Knesset begins, with the bill for the appointment of judges lurching in the background, only a few late-night-hours away from becoming law.

Only this unprecedented public protest has prevented the government of Israel from completing this move in the previous session. To prevent it from doing so in this one as well, the public protest must continue and intensify. I wish to thank each and every one of you for being here every week. I cherish and appreciate you all.

Constitutional law in Israel should certainly be reexamined. There are surely many things that could be improved and fixed. No institution is immune to criticism and reevaluation, not even the Supreme Court. But not like this. Not at this pace. Not in this way. Not as part of a crazy package deal of personal and corrupt laws. And mostly – not by letting the government select the judges.

We do not trust the goodwill of any politician to restrain his own power. We trust only institutions to do so.

The State of Israel has no constitution. The Knesset is deteriorating to a new low with every election, lower than ever before.

The only barricade to the government's arbitrary power is the Supreme Court. We have all seen the horror show in Jerusalem on Thursday, starring Yariv Levin. We have seen them trample on pictures of Israel's judges, in a demonstration

that appears to be taken from the darkest regimes. The independence of the court and the selection of its judges – not by the members of the coalition! – are red lines. We will stay here to protect them.

Tonight, the representatives of Israeli academia are speaking in 35 locations, from Dan to Eilat. A Nobel Prize laureate, Israel Prize laureates, members of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, and faculty members, like myself, your neighbor from the Faculty of Engineering at Bar Ilan University. On normal days, I am happy to be concerned with such trivialities as lasers and optic fibers.

What is it that brings us here? What is it that takes us to the streets today? We fear for the future of research in the State of Israel. We fear for the future of Israeli academia.

Academic research in the State of Israel is the basis for its high-tech industry, the top cause of its financial strength and global standing. Excellent academic research can only happen with full freedom from any kind of intervention. The freedom to doubt, to question conventions, to dedicate your time and efforts to trying out what is unpopular and unaccepted. Freedom from the dictates of the regime. Freedom that only independent institutions can guarantee for the long term.

We hear calls in the Israeli government for “a reform in academia as well.” That we need “a different academia.” Friends who support the legislation ask me: “What are you so worried about? What could possibly happen?” So, let me tell you what could happen. In Texas, for example, the State Senate approved a decision to fire faculty members. Why? Because they taught content in their courses that did not

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SHMUEL

coincide with the governmental curriculum. Do you get it? “Teach what we – the government – think. If you do not, we will fire you.” We are here today to say: Israel will not be Texas!

In Hungary, most of the universities have been ousted from the research budgets of the European Union. This happened because Orbán’s government appointed political administrations for them. The European Union’s programs are the most prestigious and competitive ones. In the State of Israel, it is much more difficult to conduct cutting-edge research without participating in these programs. It is much more difficult to gain international standing and recognition without participating in these programs. Year after year, Israeli academia is the largest winner of these research grants relative to the size of its population. More than any other country in Europe. Without a guarantee of academic freedom out of the reach of politicians, we will not be there. We will end up in the academic periphery, on the outskirts of the Middle East.

Israel will not be Hungary!

And to those of you who think this cannot happen, let me tell you another thing. This week we discovered that for the position of head of the Council for Higher Education, the Minister of Education Yoav Kisch is planning to appoint the former rector of the Ono Academic College, from its Faculty of Law. Several years ago, the Faculty of Law at the Ono Academic College launched a campaign to recruit religious students. I quote: “Taking over the army was the easy part. After you study at Ono, you will be able to take over the Supreme Court.” So there you go. From there, from this faculty, from this sentiment, the Minister of Education wants to appoint the head of the Council for Higher Education.

Unfortunately, there are those who would like to see Texas- and Hungary-like academia right here. The morning after the legislative moves of Yariv Levin and Simcha Rothman, no one will be able to stop them. But we are here to say – from every part of this country – we will not let this happen!

The State of Israel must emerge from this crisis stronger. It has no other choice. The call of the hour is wide consensus, based on painful compromise. The Rolling Stones’ song says, “You can’t always get what you want.” In this crisis, neither those who support the government’s actions nor those who oppose them will get what they want. Because the price will be breaking Israel in half. But the song goes on: “If you try, sometimes, you just might find, you get what you need.” And we, supporters and opposers, must try. Not to get – but to take, to claim, and to achieve – what we need: a new definition of the constitutional regime in the State of Israel, based on a wide consensus among anyone who holds a democratic Israel dear, and within the red lines of the separation of powers.

To all of you standing here, I say: Keep coming! Do not give in! Do not get discouraged! But prepare yourselves also for painful compromise and concessions. And to those that are still not here with us, those who voted for this government but are not at ease with what is happening, those who want change but see that this is not the way, I say, Come! Climb off the fence! Do not leave the arena to the extremists. Join us next week! Together, we will demand that our politicians give us what we need.

Because not only do we not have “another academia,” we do not have another country.

Thank you all very much.

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HOD
HaSHARON

Prof. Rafi Melnick Reichman University



**Good evening Hod Hasharon,
Without democracy there is no
academia, without academia
there is no research, and
without research there is no
progress.**

As the president of a university, I would like to say something about academia and freedom. The crux of the matter is that democracy and freedom are critical for research:

They enable the conduct of research without intervention by outsiders.

They allow researchers to work without censorship, fear or unfair influence by the government or irrelevant interests.

Freedom is vital to guarantee that academic research is objective and reliable.

Academic freedom makes it possible to research issues in dispute, to challenge prevalent ideas, theories and concepts, and to implement unorthodox means of investigation.

Research in dictatorships is behind research done in democracies.

Every Saturday night I attend demonstrations, and I love seeing the squares filling with citizens who are concerned about the future of our state and are willing to do something about it. "This tune cannot be stopped", and with a joint effort we will be able to throw this regime coup into the dustbin of history.

So let's recap:

2022 was a particularly good year for the Israeli state and economy.

We emerged stronger from Covid, and the concerns that the revocation of the furlough

policy would result in mass and prolonged unemployment were proven false; the level of employment quickly rose, and we reached some of the lowest unemployment rates in the history of Israel.

GNP grew over 6%, and over 4% in product and income per capita – more than in almost all developed nations.

The rates of poverty and inequality declined.

Export flourished, led by the high tech industry, and the "problem" we had to deal with was the appreciation of the shekel, which became one of the world's strongest currencies.

On the downside, there was the rise of inflation, but this problem was manageable; we had already dealt with higher inflation rates in the past.

It pains me to tell you that some of the huge achievements of the Israeli economy have been wasted on the regime coup.

The good news is that the foundations of the economy are still strong. If we manage to stop the coup, the economy will recover, although it will take us a long time to regain the trust that the Israeli economy enjoyed in 2022.

The bad news is that completion of the legislation would push the economy over the edge and into the abyss.

I am certain that the Prime Minister understands the huge price we are paying for the regime coup. The price is expressed in the decision of Moody's rating agency to downgrade the outlook for the Israeli economy. The meaning of this decision is a rise in the interest rate that the market will pay for foreign loans. In other words, also in the upcoming state budget, the government

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HOD
HaSHARON

will have to allocate resources to pay for interest, at the expense of such other uses as health, education, infrastructures etc. The business sector will be affected by the rise of the interest rate, investments will decline and future growth will be curbed. Households will also be impacted because interest rates on mortgages and other credit, such as overdrafts, will also rise.

If the government – and chiefly the Prime Minister – are willing to pay this huge price, we need to understand what they get in return.

The question is, how come the government is prepared to pay such a price?

The answer is that all the members of the coalition gain a benefit that makes it worth their while to pay the price:

The Ultra Orthodox want to have their evasion of military service established by law, but they are stopped from doing so by the Supreme Court.

The nationalists are interested in expanding the

settlements and leading to a full annexation of the territories, but they are stopped from doing so by the Supreme Court.

About one half of the coalition, if not more, want the Torah to become the law of the land, and for us to become a halachic state, but they are stopped from doing so by the Supreme Court.

And last but not least is the Prime Minister, who is willing to pay any price to evade justice, but is stopped from doing so by the Supreme Court.

It is not hard to notice that there is an important element of the Coalition that gets nothing in return, and that is the large and most important group that is keeping silent. I mean the members of the Likud party, who used to cherish the value of liberalism. Why are they keeping silent?

Memorial Day and Independence Day are behind us, and we look forward to the halting of the legislation and to new hope for unity, because **“a unified people will never be defeated”**.



Ilan Faigenbaum



NO ACADEMIA WITHOUT DEMOCRACY

KRAYOT

Dr. Yair Sagy University of Haifa



Good evening,

My name is Yair and I am a law lecturer at the University of Haifa.

I am also a representative of the Israeli Law Professors' Forum for Democracy and a committee member of academia's opposition to the overhaul.

This is an important evening, because tomorrow morning the Knesset will be returning to regular activity.

We are now on the verge of the second act of our fight, after having completed the first one very successfully. This is why it is important for me to remind you of the magnitude of our achievements so far:

We have stopped a strong and rampageous coalition! **This would not have happened without you. Well done!**

Now, right before the coalition reconvenes, is the time to remind ourselves what we have learned and achieved so far in the first act of this protest:

First, we discovered energies we did not know we had, and a moral commitment we did not realize was embedded in us. Our senses have been sharpened. We learned to fight for our rights. And we said to the government: No more! We will not compromise over democracy! We have made it clear to the government – and reminded ourselves – **that we are soldiers in the Israeli democracy guard!**

Second, we came together as an enormous camp. We got up from our couches and came together as one; that way we discovered we are not alone, and that there are many Israelis who cherish democracy. **Just look around you at this beautiful crowd.**

Third, we drew the red lines. We have made it clear to the government – and to ourselves – what are the values and principles without which Israel will not be a democracy. We understood the importance of an independent judicial branch, uncontrolled by politicians; we have learned how vital a bill of human rights – for all humans! – is in Israel. And I say this to you tonight: **undermining academia will also mark the crossing of a red line, because without academia, there is no democracy.**

Fourth, our protest made us realize that what was – can no longer be. The coalition's arrogance, and mostly the clear sense that it is not here to serve the Israeli public but only certain groups in it, made us ask ourselves some hard questions.

We asked ourselves: How long will we go on accepting unjust arrangements in the hopes that they will allow us to continue living together?

We asked: How long will we go on discriminating against marginalized groups in Israeli society – including non-Jews, people with disabilities, the gay community, and women – and still call ourselves a democracy? **We demand a new work roster for Israeli society.**

Our fifth major achievement in this protest is a healthy suspicion against the government. Democracy is based on constant monitoring of the government. Woe to us if we make do with the elections once every few years, to voice our opinion about the government. And this is exactly where academia, on behalf of which I am speaking today, comes in.

Critical, vibrant academia is vital for the prosperity of our country and the democratic regime. Academia trains our doctors, our lawyers, our engineers, and our teachers.

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Without strong academia – the Israeli economy, law, culture and security will come to nothing. But the lifeline on which academia depends is the liberal-democratic spirit, and mainly the freedom of thought and creation. **Only in a democratic-egalitarian environment in which critical questions can be asked, can academia thrive.**

But the members of the coalition have made it clear that independent academia – much like an independent judicial system – is a threat to them, which is why they are attempting to undermine it. The clear outcome of this move will be the destruction of the higher education system in Israel. This is what I am here to warn against –

just like there is no academia without democracy, so there is no democracy without academia.

We will not allow the coalition to continue on its path of destruction. The coalition must know that the public has changed over the past few months. What Rothman, Levin, and Bibi must understand is that they have picked a fight with the wrong generation. Therefore, we must continue together in our fight for democracy.

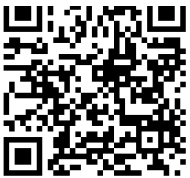
And to the government, we say: we are prepared for the next campaign in this battle, and we will win it.



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HERZLIYA

Prof. Yaron Oz Tel Aviv University



Good evening, Herzliya. Good evening, fighters for democracy.

I am proud to stand here with you.

The reason the Minister of Defense was not fired in the dead of night is only because of the social protest. The brief lull in the regime coup, the downgrade of Israel's rating outlook but not of its actual credit rating, the fact that no leader of any liberal democratic nations, primarily the United States is ready to meet the Prime Minister and his ministers, are all the outcome of the huge wave of social protest.

Our social protest has immense power.

Under the pressure of the protest, the coup architect Levin admitted that his plan, known by its whitewashed name "legal reform", is a regime



coup. Point-blank. This fact has been clear from the first day on which the plan was presented. It is a blatant and ruthless attempt at a regime coup, taken straight out of the books of dictators. A violent attempt to overtake the legal system, the media and academia.

Since the establishment of the national failure government, we have found ourselves in an ongoing historic event. The whole world looks at us in awe. The protest is amazing and inspiring.

But let us not get confused. The world will not save us. It will not do the work for us. The burden lies entirely on our own shoulders. The regime coup has not been stopped. For the dictator and his cronies, this is nothing but a "light bump". A recalculation of the route. The criminal defendant has not given up on unlimited power. He is a close friend of Orbán and a great admirer of Putin. He is running away from trial. If he obtains the power he seeks, he will use it, in any way, regardless of the cost. We know him. We know his allies. We know the arsenal of the laws in the pipeline.

It is for good reason that we feel great distress. It is for good reason that we are afraid. Without democracy there is no freedom, no health, no justice, no equality. **Without democracy there is no academia.**

What does the future hold in store for us?

The outcome of the protest cannot be a compromise. The removal of the oppressive legislation is also not sufficient.

For its 75th anniversary, a new contract is required between the State of Israel and its citizens. A contract which is built on a solid foundation of a liberal democracy in the spirit of the Declaration of Independence.

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The basis of the contract would be a constitution which enshrines individuals' rights. The pillars of the contract would be defense mechanisms, to thwart any future attempt at a regime coup. Such attempts will be made. That much is clear.

Today's democratic Israel does not have three independent branches of government. As head of the executive branch, the Prime Minister has taken the legislative branch hostage, using an intimidating mechanism called "coalition discipline". Even laws that have broad consent such as the ankle monitor law to prevent domestic violence are not passed. This distortion needs to be fixed. **Three independent branches of government are required.**

The number of terms a prime minister may hold office must be capped. Power corrupts. This is not a slogan, it is a fact. Criminal defendants must be prohibited from serving as prime minister. This is a clear conflict of interest. And these are only

some of the required pillars of the new contract.

Israel has many social flaws. Inequality, oppression, discrimination and racism. Some of them are intentional, others originate from lack of attention and interest. They must be remedied. But these remedies cannot be carried out without the new civil contract.

We must mark this contract as the North Star of our protest. This is the goal of the struggle. Achieving it is the definition of victory. The desired contract will be achieved and with broad consent. I have no doubt about it. There is no other choice. In its light, we will all be active partners in building a healthy and egalitarian society for the next 75 years. When our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren read the history books of this period of time, we will say to them **"We were there. We fought for you"**. Thank you very much.



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ZICHRON
YA'AKOV

Prof. Rivka Carmi Ben-Gurion University of the Negev



Good evening Zichron Yaacov!

Good evening to you, combatants of the State of Israel's Second War of Independence! And CHAPEAU to all of you for your

determination and perseverance to fight tirelessly and fearlessly for the liberal and democratic nature of our country.

I was born and raised in the town of ZICHRON YA'AKOV.

My parents, Tzipora and Menachem Radner, are buried here.

During the celebrations of the State of Israel's 10th anniversary, Zeev Niederman, the principal of our elementary School, gathered us ten-year-olds and said: "You are the children of the State and its destiny rests on your shoulders."

I took this statement literally, and all my life I strove with dedication and pride to contribute to the development and prosperity of our Israeli State and society, in the spirit of the Declaration of Independence: **freedom, equality, dignity.**

Even in my worst nightmares I never dreamt that we would reach the day when our very existence here as a free People in our country would be under such a terrible threat from within; or that we would have to fight against the destroyers among us whose only purpose is to rule without limits while promoting nationalistic, messianic and racist interests that have nothing to do with our Jewish heritage and identity, or with the respectable place we have earned with such great effort among the free and enlightened global communities.

Those interests serve only to gain **money, power and respect.**

Not respect for knowledge, culture or values.

Not respect for achievements or good deeds.

Not mutual respect of justice, equality, ethics, or decency.

A dubious respect that derives from the intoxication of the power to rule.

Today... the fate of our Jewish and democratic state rests on our shoulders!

This so-called 'legal reform' is only the beginning. Yes, the beginning long-awaited by the proponents of the regime change. Later – there will be no barrier to stop the implementation of dozens of proposed bills that would limit freedom, discrimination and deprivation which are already in the making... Guns loaded and locked awaiting Zero Hour.

Last Thursday we realized how determined this government is to bring this Zero Hour upon us, and it will be the destruction of the democratic and liberal Jewish State.

Tonight, I am one of 35 men and women from academia, who are speaking across the country, saying that **without democracy, there is no academia.**

Academic freedom to study and research without fear of the government and without orders from above is the lifeblood of science. Science is based on truth, transparency, equality, openness, and local and international collaboration.

Our security and economic existence are based entirely on the human capital we train in the universities and colleges, as well as on our scientific capabilities.

Israel's amazing achievements in science and technology, military industry,

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advanced agriculture, medicine and health services, as well as culture and art are all a result of more than one hundred years of a free, egalitarian, creative and groundbreaking academia.

Scientific and technological research is extremely expensive and a significant part of the resources for our research comes from international research funds.

Scientists and international funding bodies avoid non-democratic countries like the plague. Countries that do not have REAL and FULL freedom like the former USSR, Turkey, Poland or Hungary are not even players on the scientific field.

Orbán rose to power in Hungary in 2010. The first thing he did was to announce a legal reform. There was protest and there was resistance, so he slowed down and managed to put his opponents to sleep. However, eventually, it happened. The reform was implemented. And after that...

Any university that opposed the regime was shut down.

Gender studies in universities were cancelled, and university funds were transferred to governmental management.

A fund to finance research preferred by the government was established, with severe limitations on the independence of academic institutions.

The result was that this year, the largest European research fund announced the termination of cooperation and funding of researchers and bodies whose source of funding is in Hungary.

It didn't happen overnight, but it happened in Hungary, with stalling maneuvers, piece by piece.



Here it will not happen because we will neither be put to sleep nor fall asleep!

The predicted blow to the judiciary, which would give the executive branch unlimited power to do whatever it wants, will eliminate democracy in Israel and with it the trail-blazing Israeli academia and groundbreaking science that have made Israel a global high-tech and defense powerhouse.

This is an existential threat to the State of Israel, which we will prevent with courage and determination.

Ben-Gurion once said: **“The State of Israel cannot exist without the rule of law and without the rule of democracy. These two principles are intertwined. Jews as Jews can only exist in a land that holds freedom for minorities, freedom of choice, freedom of thought, freedom of movement, freedom of opposition to the government”.**

Dear friends, **democracy is the Iron Dome of each and every one of us**, and if our lives matter, we must fight for it with all our might, tirelessly and fearlessly, until we prevail.

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HADERA

Prof. Itzhak Harpaz Yezreel Valley College



Good evening Hadera.

I'm delighted to be here among fellow supporters of democracy.

This evening, as a member of academia, I would like to talk about democracy's importance to academia. I begin by saying that, just like in many other fields, "without democracy there is no academia!" We talk a lot about the importance of democracy and democratic elections, which determine the make-up of the government in accordance with the decision of the majority – a majority that believes itself to be omnipotent.

In this context, Benjamin Franklin, the statesman and scientist who had the greatest influence on the politics and history of the United States, said: "Democracy is two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for lunch. Liberty is a well-armed sheep contesting the vote".

We are not armed – but we are determined to fight for our freedom!!

Democracy, in practice, is a worldview, a value system, based on the principle of human rights. Humans are free and therefore must be respected according to humanistic values. For example: Votes like the one between the two wolves and the sheep cannot be allowed to occur. It also cannot be decided to oppress minorities, even if the majority decides to do so.

"True democratic government is government that grants people sufficient freedom and, at the same time, ensures that this freedom is not abused." [Albert Einstein]

Academic freedom is the lifeblood of academia!!

What is academic freedom? Academic freedom

is the freedom granted to all scientists in an institution of higher learning to study any topic within their field of specialization. History teaches that this is the most effective approach, and that cases in which the state, or religion, had attempted to interfere with this principle, did immeasurable damage to science and to society. The essence of academic freedom is the premise that scientists study topics that interest them and contribute to the expansion of human knowledge.

Damage to academic freedom is extremely serious and is likely to cause damage to scientific research!!

On the day of the major strike throughout the economy a few weeks ago, which also included many universities and colleges, I was asked, during an interview by a radio correspondent, why academia was also striking. What have you got to do with legal reform?

I answered the correspondent that if a regime coup occurs in Israel, with the current government's host of surreal plans, academia would be next in line.

In totalitarian regimes there is no academic freedom!!! This was the case under Communist rule in Eastern Europe. In many Eastern Bloc countries faculties of social sciences and humanities were shut down, because the values of freedom, creativity, and the democratic ideas of thinkers come from these disciplines, which of course pose a threat to the regime (due to which they are labeled as anarchists)!

Especially venomous is the regime of Putin, who recently continued and intensified his purging of the leadership of the universities. Dozens of universities have new rectors that have

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received the stamp of approval of the Kremlin, including Russia's top universities.

David Ben-Gurion, who wrote many articles and books and dealt extensively with the subject of democracy even before the establishment of the state, wrote in Hazon uderekh in 1949: "The State of Israel, I hope, will never be a totalitarian state where the government dictates scientific truth, literary style, and directions in art or intellectual affairs. In the State of Israel, intellectuals will enjoy absolute freedom, and no one will conquer or enslave the human spirit."

We have recently witnessed processes aimed at advancing initiatives that run counter to the democratic character of the state of Israel. We listen to these voices with anxiety and concern. It is important for us, at this point in time, to emphasize that which goes without saying: **For us, academia in Israel will continue to be an egalitarian, welcoming, inclusive, and respectful home for all those who enter its gates!**

We will continue to research and to provide education, while maintaining a fair and human approach, the strict observance of human rights, and tolerance, in the spirit of Israel's Declaration of Independence. We are guided by human dignity and non-discrimination. These values are the true essence of democracy!

We hope that the State of Israel continues to operate according to principles based on the freedom and equality of all members of society.

I would like to conclude with two important quotes by David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister [listen up, Bibi]:

"No one man determines the fate of a state or a nation, and no one is indispensable."

And the second quote:

"The State of Israel will be tested neither by its wealth, nor by its army or technology, but rather by its moral character and its humanitarian values."

In conclusion: Without democracy there is no academia, no science, no cyber, no culture, and no life-saving medicine. Without democracy, there is no State of Israel!

Thank you very much, and good night.

We shall overcome.



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HAIFA

Prof. Moti Segev The Technion – Israel Institute of Technology



Good evening. My name is Moti Segev. I am a professor at the Technion and a recipient of the Israel Prize for Physics. But inside, I am Sacagiu, son of Shlomo the cobbler, a Holocaust survivor. My father and mother were poor people who raised us on Zionism, plain and simple. We started out in a one-room apartment in Wadi Salib. Then we moved to the evacuee housing in Neve Sha'anán. This being the case, I cannot be said to be a "privileged person with a Rolex."

I was raised in a Revisionist home on the ideology of Jabotinsky and Begin. My views are right-wing: I believe we must not cede the Golan Heights or the Jordan Valley to foreign rule. Equally as important, however, is my belief in the values of democracy, justice, and equality. I can say, without exaggerating, that parts of our leadership have lost these basic values over the past few months.

Today, we stand here together, rightists and leftists, Jews, Druze (my brothers in arms) and Arabs, fighting for the character of this country. There is no separation here between people. There is "we." All of us. There is togetherness.

If we choose polarization, we will end up with the destruction of the Third Temple. And this, my friends, is something we, and certainly our children, cannot afford.

My views as a recipient of the Israel Prize in Physics are no more important than the views of my late father Shlomo, the simple cobbler. Therefore, I will not speak about politics, but rather about things I understand: academia, and its connection to high-tech and to defense. I returned to the Technion as a Full Professor at Princeton University in the United States. I am proud to say that I made my most meaningful discoveries at the Technion.

I educated generations of excellent researchers. Twenty-four of them are today professors in Israel and abroad, and many others hold key positions in industry. Over the years, I recruited dozens of Israelis to return to Israel to take academic positions, with 30 at the Technion alone. Many others were recruited by Israel's research universities. But now I can say, with great concern, that this is the first time since returning to Israel in 1998 that I see candidates holding off on their decision and waiting on the fence.

We hereby declare our unrelenting commitment to the values proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence, which was signed at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art on 14 May 1948



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Why is this happening? What has changed, and what will change?

Until now, what brought these minds and these individuals back to Israel was Zionism (which is not a bad word), the knowledge that our future and our children's future is here – in the democratic state that allows everyone to express their opinion and to research diverse fields, and the certainty that we will be able to continue developing the technologies of the future as a world-leading country. All these factors outweighed the economic lure of working abroad. The changes that the government is trying to make will do damage to all of this, and to the future of our children. Only our children and their peers will be required to contribute the best years of their lives to the army for the benefit of the state, some risking their lives doing so,

while a large and growing population is exempt. We, and later our children, will be required to pay higher and higher taxes in order to support a growing population that does not shoulder its share of the burden, that does not support itself, and, in some cases, is not even Zionist.

The decision-makers of today are people who despise all of our values, who express themselves toward us in a disgraceful manner, who incite others against us, and for whom the word “shame” lost all meaning long ago. It is difficult to feel the same respect and the same longing for Israel, and to give up a desirable position and generous compensation abroad to return to a country that, according to the plans of its leaders, might be completely transformed. Friends, these scholars whom we aspire to bring back to Israel are the future of research in Israel. It is they who produce the knowledge that will later be applied by startup companies, for development, and for geopolitical, economic, and social success. We cannot give them up. Israel's future generations will not be able to exist if there is no global-standard academic research.

The key sentence is: Knowledge is the future.

There is a direct correlation between the quality of our researchers and the quality of our high-tech, and our technology and defense industries. At the Technion, several companies, such as Elbit and Elscint, came into being. The MATAM science park, from which Israel's high-tech industry emerged, began at the Technion. Therefore, the brain drain from academia will also damage the high-tech and the technology industry.

In the past, it used to be the dream of every Israeli startup entrepreneur to sell his or her venture to a large corporation that would

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keep it here so that it makes a contribution here, in Israel. One example is Invision, which was founded by my colleagues, professors Roni Kimel and Alex and Michael Bronstein of the Technion. When the time came to sell the company to a large corporation, they got many offers, but CEO Sagi Ben-Moshe insisted on selling to a bidder that offered less money but undertook to keep the company in Israel. The company was sold to Intel, which established a division here in Haifa based on this venture. Today, companies that purchase an Israeli startup are looking only for how to get it out of Israel. It's frightening! We can already see another blow to startups, in the form of the difficulty that has arisen to attract investors to Israel. Our struggle is over the character of

Israeli society. We feel that fewer people are carrying the burden, whereas the number of yeshiva students whom we are carrying continues to grow.

I say to you here and now – Enough!

As for defense: I am a former infantry soldier. I was a company commander in a reconnaissance unit in the reserves for a decade, in Lebanon and also in the first Intifada. But defense also means taking up significant technological positions. Some of my former students became leaders in the defense industry. For example a former student named Assaf, who is here today, led an important project that won the Israel Defense Prize two years ago.

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These individuals are in the defense industry for ideological reasons. They receive tempting offers from abroad, but who among them would want to remain in the defense industry under a regime that is only half democratic?

I will conclude with three appeals:

First – I appeal to the large population of liberal rightists, like me, to come out to the demonstrations en masse. I won't lie – it is very difficult for me to take part in demonstrations alongside people who call to end the occupation, but I can't turn a blind eye to the attempt to make us a non-democratic state. Come out here and join forces with the defenders of democracy.

My second appeal is to Knesset members from the Likud party, half of whom, like me, are liberal rightists. Do not remain silent. I expect you to say out loud what Galant started to say, even at the

cost of losing your seat. This madness must end.

Finally, I appeal again to you, the large crowd that has gathered here tonight. To you I say – **we are fighting for the future of the state**. Let's tell Netanyahu that we will not be Poland, devoid of democracy. If you do continue, Binyamin Netanyahu, your past achievements will be discarded in the dustbin of history. You, Binyamin Netanyahu, will be remembered for splitting up Israeli society and destroying the Zionist enterprise.

I would like to conclude with the thundering words of Jabotinsky, from Beitar's movement anthem: **"Silence is mire"**. These words of Jabotinsky are meant for all members of the liberal right:

Get up and act. Join the protest movement.

Thank you very much.



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TIVON

Prof. Yoed Tsur The Technion – Israel Institute of Technology



Good evening, Tivon!

I am here tonight as part of the academia's campaign under the slogan "Without democracy, there is no academia". When this slogan was first drafted, I was a little dubious: Does Russia have no academia? Do Saudi Arabia and Iran have no academia? So I looked into it, and I found that all of the countries with leading academic research are liberal democracies with a separation of powers. So yes, indeed, **without a liberal democracy there is no excellent academia!**

Years ago, when I was doing my post-doctorate at a leading university in the United States, I was contacted informally by the head of the new faculty search committee, and he asked why I wouldn't submit my candidacy. "After all", he said, "we know you, and we need your field here". My evasive answer was "my wife will kill me". But at home, we talked in depth about it, and about many other things, including the Monica Lewinsky affair which was then rattling America. We saw around us people who were angry at their president, who took personal offense at his lies to them, and we observed it all from the sidelines.

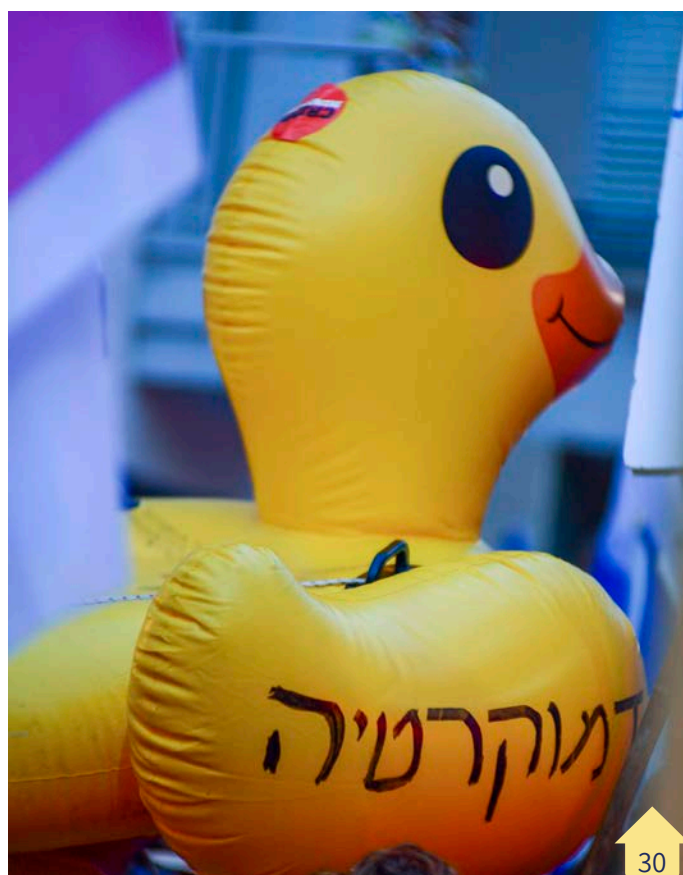
We didn't want to be on the sidelines. We wanted to care about our Prime Minister. We wanted to feel involved. We wanted to belong. Never did we imagine back then that we would end up having so many reasons to be angry and take offense and get involved. That we would have a Prime Minister who is a criminal defendant, whose expertise is lies, who holds propaganda media channels which belch out alternative truth.

Shame on you!

Ehud Manor said it best: **"I have no other country, even if my country is ablaze"...** And it was. We returned to the second intifada and to several more rounds of military reserve duty. And yet, Ehud Manor continues, **"only a word in Hebrew can penetrate my veins and soul..."**

I know an oncology specialist who is with her family in Vancouver, and is facing a similar deliberation. Will they make the same decision we did? Israel has less than 200 oncology specialists. How many people would die prematurely if one fifth of them decided to go elsewhere to create a better future for their children, when Israel is no longer a democracy?

It's so easy to trample on a picture of the heads of the judicial system, to incite against them, to turn the word "elite" into an insult, and to shout on



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the propaganda channel that we are privileged and cannot bear any change. It is far harder, and better, to raise elites that serve, to enable social mobility (including through universal core studies), and to create a climate that enables the elites to pull society and the economy up.

Several years ago, I attended a conference in Manchester, and I was approached by representatives of King Abdullah University in Saudi Arabia, with an offer to join them. They said, “the university is a closed city, you wouldn’t have to leave it at all. We are looking for well-established scientists, because the King wants to improve scientific and technological research in the country”. Was the King successful? Research in that university is indeed excellent. But its impact on Saudi society and academia is doubtful.

It is not for nothing that academia has been under attack in Hungary for several years now, like in the plans of Kohelet Forum. The fundamental values that guide the Technion

include “equal social rights for all citizens of the state, irrespective of religion, race and sex. Freedom of conscience, language, education and culture”.

In this sense, academia is one of the gatekeepers. It implements liberal values by its very nature. This is a thorn in the side of Kohelet Forum. But we have learned from the Hungarian case. Against the destruction of the independence of the courts, we will put up **an iron wall** and academia will be part of it. If the regime coup does not come to a halt – the state will. It will halt from the ground up, with mutual support, and while harnessing the power of communities and solidarity.

We miss not what the State of Israel was, but what the State of Israel could be, with its diversity of talent, hues and creative power. And it will achieve it only if it is a liberal democracy. Therefore, we will continue to go out into the streets and to claim with all our might:

Democracy!!



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JERUSALEM

Prof. Guy Miron The Open University



Let's take a look at the diversity of Israeli Judaism, academic freedom, and the values of the Declaration of Independence, from the Jerusalem perspective.

75 years ago, when the Declaration of Independence was first read aloud, my father was a 17-year old boy in the besieged Jewish quarter of the Old City. My father was born in Jerusalem to a Sephardi father who survived the 1929 Hebron riots, and to a mother who immigrated from the city of Ioannina in Greece. He went to the Alliance School in Mahane Yehuda, and like many of his generation, was exposed to a variety of cultures and languages – Hebrew, Arabic, Ladino and Greek, in addition to French and English. Like many of his family and neighborhood, my father went to the Beitar youth movement. In early December 1947, he joined the Etzel fighters in the Jewish quarter, where he fought for close to six months. During the fighting, he was hit by a bullet that was aimed at his heart, and miraculously survived thanks to a field dressing that blocked the bullet. After the Jewish quarter fighters surrendered to the Jordanian forces on May 28, 1948, he fell into Jordanian captivity, where he spent about nine months until he was released at the end of February 1949. Since then, to the present day, my father has been loyal to the political camp in which he grew up – the Herut Movement and later the Likud party. But his first loyalty has always been to the state for whose establishment he had fought. My father studied law and served as a lawyer for decades, and despite the political differences of opinion between us, now he, just like me, sees the idea that politicians will appoint judges as dangerous and inconceivable.

It is important to understand that the regime coup initiative is dangerous not only to the future of democracy in Israel, but also to the future of higher education. The Open University, where I went as a student and where I now teach and research, stands for the values of pluralism and equality. We, like our colleagues in the institutes of higher education in Israel, see education as a primary tool for closing gaps and building bridges between communities in Israeli society.

Academic freedom, which is a cornerstone of all sciences, can only exist for any length of time under the values of the Declaration of Independence. Free academia is a strategic growth engine and infrastructure for Israel's being an advanced and prosperous country. Such academia cannot exist without the envelope of a solid liberal democracy. Israel's strength is based to a large degree on its scientific and cultural achievements. These achievements are to a great extent the product of our higher education system, whose construction and cultivation over decades have been and still are among the key building blocks of Zionism. Weakening the judicial system will enable political intervention in academic life and in the study and research subjects. It is therefore our duty to object to any campaign that works against the values of the Declaration of Independence.

As a historian who studies the Jewish past, I dedicate my main professional efforts to shining a light on the world of Jews in Europe, and mainly Germany, in modern times. The Jews that I study have known fascinating periods of economic and cultural growth, that have yielded blessed fruit that we enjoy to this very day. Later, during the Nazi regime, they experienced violation of rights, exclusion

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JERUSALEM

and humiliation which ended, for those who did not leave their homeland, in a tragic fate. Research into the Jewish past, which is done in the context of a lively international dialogue with colleagues from the world over who find it of great interest is, to me, a central and vital mission in understanding the complex roots of Israeli Judaism – a Judaism which is right now writing a new and no less complex chapter, and for whose character and nature we are now fighting. I attach great importance also to the educational aspect of this work – presenting to the next generations of Israelis a rich, complex and multifaceted Jewish heritage, which was the result of a meeting between a variety of world cultures in Europe, in the Middle East and elsewhere around

the world. This meeting, including its past and future, is also an inseparable part of the big picture with which we are all concerned now. Also my father, with whose narrative I started, is a product of this important meeting, which we cannot give up.

Finally, as a researcher of Jewish history, I would like to remind us all that throughout most of history, including the periods I study, Jews were a minority, fighting for their rights against aggressive majority groups, and in those places where they flourished they owed their welfare to principles similar to those of the Declaration of Independence. **This lesson is one we must take with us also into the next 75 years in which Israeli Judaism will take shape.**



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KFAR
YONA

Dr. Claudia Kedar The Hebrew University of Jerusalem



Good evening, Kfar Yona!

I stand here today as a four-year activist of the protest.

I also stand here as a lecturer and researcher from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Tonight, lecturers from many higher education institutions are speaking in 35 locations throughout Israel, to say:

No Democracy = No Academia

And without free academia – there is no democracy.

I also stand here tonight as an immigrant from Argentina.

I was born in Argentina, under a dictatorship, and I spent most of my years in the education system under a dictatorship.

When budgets of universities and cultural institutions were cut, when the media was censored, when dissidents, real or imagined, were arrested, tortured, and disappeared.

I remember what it was like living in fear!

But let me tell you something –

I will not go through this again!

Israel will not become a dictatorship!

I am a historian of Latin America – one of the world's regions that has known the most dictatorships.

The Netanyahu-Levin-Rothman government is trying to trick us into thinking that if there are no tanks in our streets, as in Latin America – this is not a coup.

However, we all understand that these laws they

are trying to pass, are as deadly as thousands of tanks in our streets!!!

Meanwhile, backed by the President of Israel, they are trying to put the protest to sleep and throw dust in our eyes with formulas and calculations of the composition of the Committee for Selecting Judges – but these calculations are not what counts.

Like Latin America, where no one remembers how many tanks and generals participated in the coup – here too, no one will remember these numbers if the coup is completed!!!

The discussions at the President's residence deal only with the technicalities of the elimination of the separation of powers – and not the actual destruction of democracy.

And what about a discussion of the aftermath of the coup? About the day when the government has unlimited power?

We will not let the president – or anyone else – sell us out! We will not!

Two historic and unprecedented events are happening as we speak:

First, the galloping of the Netanyahu-Levin-Rothman-Smotrich-Ben-Gvir junta towards the smashing of the legal system, police, military, Bank of Israel, education system, health system, Hi-Tech industry, academia, culture, media – against all of the civil service – against all of us. Shame!

The second event, that all of you are a part of, is this amazing protest –

We are the silent majority that is not willing to become an oppressed minority!

We are the silent majority that finally

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YONA

rose to its feet and became an active, determined, and strong majority!

We are the majority that are willing to fight and pay the price to save this country!

We must learn from the bitter lesson many Latin American countries have taught us. Even today, 40 years after dictatorships became democracies, these countries still struggle to form strong democracies, and are still subjected to the whims of populist and authoritarian leaders.

One of the important lessons learned from the Latin American case is that dictatorship is not just a given constitutional state, and not just a formal form of government.

Dictatorship is also a transformation of behavioral norms – where arbitrariness by the branches of government suddenly becomes the name of the game.

People are arrested without any justified cause and lose their jobs because government cronies don't like them.

As dictatorship deepens, these new norms lead also to a change in mentality – people internalize that public representatives do not serve the people, but themselves.

People become suspicious of one another,

government corruption spreads and people start cutting corners. This is how banana republics are born.

It may sound to you like fiction or an exaggeration, but it's not. As coup bills are prepared for first, second and third readings, the "informal" dictatorship is already here.

Look how the government is ignoring the warnings of senior figures in the legal system, in the economy, and in academia – in Israel and worldwide – look how they are already changing the norms.

This is how dictatorships operate – the ruler completely ignores the people's wishes! The ruler believes he is above the law, above the truth, and above any moral norm!

The "informal" dictatorship is already here, but we can stop it from escalating!

Even if the coup will soon be completed – we can still overthrow the dictatorship!

We will not give up and will not give in!

We will keep protesting, keep resisting the dictatorship!

We will keep going until we prevail! Let us keep making history together!



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KFAR
SABA

Prof. Gur Alroey University of Haifa



Good evening, Protest of the People – Kfar Saba.

In this protest, there is no left or right. It is not the religious against the secular. And it is not Jews against Arabs. It is a protest of Israeli society as a whole, and it is one of the most important in the history of the State of Israel. It is our second War of Independence. We are the Palmach of 2023. We will fight courageously and we will not give up. Giving up will result in a change in Israel's regime and will transform Israel from a democracy to a theocracy.

In these times, the critic has become the enemy. Just look at what happened to former Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit, former Police Commissioner Roni Alsheikh, Bank of Israel Governor Amir Yaron, the leaders of the high-tech industry and the Israeli economy, the reservists, the pilots, Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara, and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Esther Hayut.

We are here to stand with them and give them support before it is too late. We are here to be their defensive shield and to strengthen these two brave women in Jerusalem on whose watch this attempted coup is occurring. We are here to remind them that they are not alone. We are here to tell them: "You are our heroines, and you are admired and appreciated for your courage."

Two days ago the Minister of Justice, who is leading the legal coup, attended a rally in which pictures of the Attorney General and the Chief Justice were placed like a rug beneath the feet of the demonstrators, to trample on them and on the dignity of the judicial system. He did not say a word. Neither did the Prime Minister,

just as he said nothing in Zion Square when an inflamed crowd shouted "traitor" at Rabin and dressed him in an S.S. uniform. This incitement will lead to the assassination of judges in Israel. This minister is a disgrace. This government is a disgrace and an embarrassment.

Friends – We are here in our multitudes to say: Enough! No more! The fortress which Justice Hayut is courageously defending is about to fall, and its collapse is prevented for now by the tens of thousands of demonstrators that gather every Saturday throughout the country.

TV channels 11, 12, and 13 have already succumbed. A country on the verge of a regime coup has no place for critical media that does not fall in line with the government. This is why the propaganda TV channel 14 was established, to disseminate poison and hatred against anyone who thinks differently.

The next fortress the current government seeks to topple, following the High Court of Justice and the media, is academia. This was hinted at when the Minister of Education tried to seize control of the National Library, retreating only because library donors announced that they would cease making donations to the library. He wants to turn Israeli academia into a "channel 14" academia – an obsequious academia that falls in line with and grovels before the establishment. Populist Bibi-ism seeks to do away with elites in general, and academic elites in particular.

Without a strong and independent academia, there is no democracy and no free society. The expression of doubt, critical thinking, and research undertaken without fear and in an unbiased manner are the beating heart of democracy and liberalism.

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Academia has already been marked as a stronghold of the left that spreads falsehoods against the state and undermines it. This is a lie! Another lie – one of many that this government is disseminating.

Prof. David Harel, President of the Israeli Academy of Science and the Humanities, has said that the current pace of events is dizzying and frightening. The cry that must be sounded tonight is a cry denouncing the leadership's outrageous lack of rationality. The reform taking shape in the judicial system, said Prof. Harel, is liable to cause mortal injury to Israeli academia, which, in turn, will also do long-term damage to the security and the economy of Israeli society.

The danger at our doorstep is clear: potential faculty members will hesitate to join the ranks of Israeli academia and will prefer positions offered to them by universities abroad. This is already happening today. Students, graduate researchers, postdoctoral fellows, and international colleagues will not come to Israel. Our access to international research funds will be limited, and foreign industries will cease cooperation with Israeli academia. In the end, we will be excluded from the international research community.

According to the proposed regime coup, politicians will select the judges. They may also select the members of the Israeli Academy of Science and the Humanities, the rectors, and the university presidents; and in the future, they may also dictate the hiring of faculty members. There is a fear that academic freedom in Israel will be impaired, and that, by means of threatening to cut back the research budgets of higher education, they will compel us to fall in line with the government.

As the Rector of the University of Haifa, from this podium, I call for solidarity among all the institutions of higher education – universities and colleges alike. I suggest putting aside our healthy competition with one another and joining forces against the regime coup.

I would like to appeal to VERA – the Association of University Heads to assist, to back, and to support the faculty members who are leading the protest movement, and especially to voice a decisive and uncompromising position against the regime coup that is currently underway in Israel. Do not sit on the fence. This is not the time to remain silent!

From this podium, I call on every scholar in Israeli academia to raise their voice in the press and the broadcast media, across social networks, in lectures and conferences, on any platform from which the voice of democracy can be sounded. And of course, first and foremost, we will raise our voice in the classroom, with students for all degrees and in every discipline.

The time has come to once again teach the principles of democracy, without which Israeli society cannot exist: pluralism, tolerance, protection of minority and civil rights, freedom of thought and freedom of opinion, freedom of conscience, and the right to equality.

I will conclude with two words [in Spanish] – **NO PASSARAN** – which amount to four words in English: **“They shall not pass! They shall not pass!”**

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KARMIEL

Dr. Meital Pinto The Zefat Academic College and the Ono Academic College



Good evening to Karmiel's Heroines and Heroes of Democracy.

My name is Meital Pinto, and I am a lecturer and Ph.D. in Law, a member of the Israeli Law Professors' Forum for Democracy. We have set ourselves an important goal: to provide reliable information about the Levin-Rothman Plan and to explain why it constitutes a regime coup.

Today, I will focus on those points of the Regime Coup which, according to reports in the media, are the subject of negotiations in the Office of the President. Let's start with Levin's so-called "softened" bill regarding the Committee for Selecting Judges in Israel. The supposedly "softened" bill refers to a committee consisting of 11 members: two Supreme Court justices, the Chief Justice, the Minister of Justice, and another two ministers chosen by the government, three MKs from the coalition, and two MKs from the opposition. With this composition, the coalition has a guaranteed majority of six members. Such a composition would allow the Committee, which will be entirely controlled by the coalition, to appoint "only" the first two judges for the Supreme Court, to replace those retiring in the near future.

Do not buy into this "softening" mantra. Even these two judges will be appointed subject to a "hearing" to ensure that they side with the values of the coalition parties, meaning to ensure that they are essentially "puppets" of the coalition. The Supreme Court's prevailing seniority method used to appoint the Chief Justice is not included in the "softened" bill, and the government has announced that it will not honor the current practice and wishes to appoint the Chief

Justice as it pleases. This could also be one of the first two appointments that will be under the exclusive control of the coalition. Hence, the coalition representatives can appoint a government loyalist as the new Chief Justice, and he will serve without limitations until he retires at the age of 70.

Since the government does not intend to honor the seniority method, if it also chooses the next Chief Justice then, in practice, the coalition will have 7 out of 11 members on the Committee: the six coalition members and its chosen Chief Justice, with the expectation that he will cooperate with the coalition. Together, they will be able to appoint judges who reflect the values of the government in all court levels, promote judges who are loyal to the government, prevent the promotion of judges whose rulings do not serve their agenda, and even fire judges who do not fall in line with the coalition.

This is a purely political move that will turn the judges of the Supreme Court into fully political positions. Judges' jobs will become available for distribution to political loyalists. It is a process that will completely eradicate judicial independence. There is no democracy without judicial independence.

This is not a matter of left or right, or of activist versus conservative judges. There are clearly conservative judges in the Supreme Court, and there is no problem with that because they have independent opinions. They are not committed to any particular politician because they were appointed based on their qualifications by the Committee for Selecting Judges, where even now Supreme Court judges do not have a veto right. Even in its current composition, which was changed in 2008, consent must be reached

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between the representatives of the Supreme Court judges and the coalition representatives.

Do not buy into the spin of Rothman and Levin claiming that the change in the Committee's composition is necessary for diversity and to reflect all of Israeli society. If they were interested in the appointment of Sephardic judges, they would have established rules for appropriate representation of all segments of the population. In fact, if Rothman and Levin truly cared about Sephardic inclusion, they would have proposed a genuine reform, and not only within the judicial system. They would have proposed a reform that would equalize educational conditions between the periphery and the center, that would better reflect Sephardim in academia, on the boards of public companies, and essentially in any position of power. Meanwhile, it is important to note that it was Rothman who last year opposed the appointment of the first female Sephardi judge to the Supreme Court. All that Rothman and Levin want is a coalition and a government that can drive freely on an open road, without checks,

without balances, without limitations. That is not democracy.

Conclusive evidence of the fact that Levin and Rothman want a government without checks and balances can be found in the populist speech of Minister Levin on Thursday. Levin claimed that the High Court of Justice protects the rights of terrorists instead of protecting the rights of IDF soldiers. This is the time to remind Minister Levin that Israel is subject to the international law of war. Judges in the High Court of Justice do not decide such cases in a vacuum. When Levin criticizes the High Court of Justice for supposedly protecting the rights of terrorists, he in fact wants to be free from all legal constraints. Levin's approach will quickly lead us to the International Court of Justice in The Hague. Why? Because according to the Principle of Complementarity, the International Court of Justice is not intended to replace investigative authorities and national courts, but rather to "complement" their work. Therefore, the International Court of Justice tends to intervene only when it is clear that



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a state ignores the principles of international law and does not conduct investigations in an independent and separate judicial system.

It is true that the Prime Minister announced before Passover that the Regime Coup was put on hold. But it was only put on hold. It was not stopped or frozen. This means that at any given moment the coup laws, most of which have already passed the first reading, can easily be passed in the second and third readings. Without a legal anchoring of the decision to suspend the legislation, the dialogue at the Office of the President is held under the constant threat of immediate advancement of the coup legislation. Therefore, the first thing that must be insisted on is the legal anchoring of the decision to suspend the legislation, so that it cannot be unilaterally and suddenly withdrawn. Should the coalition truly wish to do so, it could, for example, through the Knesset, pass a decision to remove the

Regime Coup bills from the agenda. The second thing that needs to be done regarding the dialogue at the Office of the President is to stop doing it covertly, behind closed doors. It needs to be transparent, and it needs to include all the groups that make up Israeli society. Not just elitist Jewish groups. The dialogue should be a civil discourse that also includes poor communities and communities from the periphery who will be the first to suffer from the Regime Coup. The Arab and Druze populations in Israel must also be part of the discussion at the Office of the President. Otherwise, it is impossible to seriously criticize the Levin-Rothman plan and argue that we want a true democracy in its place.

Meanwhile, a draft proposal for a government decision is on its table for Sunday. This draft proposal seeks to instruct all government ministries to shape their policy according to the values of Zionism as anchored in the Basic Law: Nation-State. What does that mean? It means prioritizing Jews – and only Jews – in construction and in acceptance to towns. In short, it means taking the Basic Law: Nation-State, which is terrible in itself, as using it to perpetuate Jewish supremacy. This draft proposal reminds us that we are fighting for a democracy that is already in a very precarious state. Israel controls millions of people in the Territories who have no voting rights or control over Israeli policy; Israel is very far from maintaining gender equality, equality between Jews and other religious and national groups, and is very far from seriously addressing poverty and the periphery. We must resist a regime coup that seeks to take away the remnants of democracy that are still left in the country that is precious to us all.





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NAHALAL

Prof. Karin Nahon Reichman University



Good Evening Nahalal!

This is the 17th Saturday of our struggle, the 5th Saturday of our gathering here, in our country, as free individuals, still in a democratic regime.

This is thanks to each and every one of us who decided to get off the couch tonight, and not to give up.

Otherwise, we would have witnessed the 2nd and 3rd readings of the Israeli Judges Selection Committee bill, the dismissal of Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, and perhaps the passing of a host of other laws that would lead Israel to one place: Politicization of its gatekeepers and the granting of unrestricted power to the executive branch of government.

What have we learnt in the last two weeks? Between Memorial Day, the dialogue under the aegis of the President, the demonstration in

Jerusalem of 100,000 supporters of the coup?

We learnt that they have no intention to stop!

They want to crush the rules of the democratic game in favor of the ruler.

Everyone is a target:

Not only the centers of power of the judiciary, the police, the State Prosecutor, the media and academia, but also the centers that generate and collect information – The Central Bureau of Statistics, The National Library and the Bank of Israel.

This is a case of sheer deception which cannot be reversed once we fall into the trap.

They try to pull the wool over our eyes, or simply lie to our faces telling us that all they are after is no more than the Judges Selection Committee. What they don't tell us is that once this committee falls, there will be nothing left to protect us against the rest of their plan.



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That includes violating the most precious thing of all – our freedom.

I say to the coalition: You have become drunk with power! But you will not succeed.

They do not realize that we have woken up!

That the democratic frogs have finally leaped out of the boiling pot!

They do not realize that now we will no longer make do with putting a stop to the coup, but will also demand to set the rules of the game which they attempt to trample.

We all understand the meaning of the growing social schism and its consequences on the country as a whole.

But if the situation deteriorates we will not bow our heads! We will win this war simply because there is no other choice!

Take pride in what we have achieved in these 17 weeks of democratic, popular protest that gives a

voice to the multiple streams of our nation.

We have a mission that is greater than all of us.

It is the second War of Independence of the Jewish-Democratic people in the 21st Century.

We are fighting for the hyphen that binds this state together. A Jewish and a Democratic state.

The State of Israel cannot be either only democratic or only Jewish.

The State of Israel is both Jewish and Democratic.

So, to conclude, prepare for the democratic marathon.

Do not doze off for even a split second! And do not blink!

At the end of the day we will prevail!



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NESS
ZIONA

Prof. Oren Perez Bar Ilan University



Good evening, Ness Ziona

My name is Oren Perez. For the last five years, I served as dean of the law faculty at Bar Ilan University, and I now head the

Multidisciplinary School for Sustainability and the Environment at the university. I am happy for the opportunity to say a few words this evening.

I will start with a few comments about the legal situation – what I think the protest movement needs to focus on in view of the negotiations currently taking place at the President's residence, and where the risks lie.

First: If we have learned anything from the last three months it is that, contrary to the propaganda of Rothman and Levin, the danger to Israeli democracy does not lie in the Supreme Court, but rather in the Knesset: in its ability to enact and change basic laws without any restriction, and to undermine the fundamental principles of our democracy.

The conclusion is that the negotiations at the President's residence must also include a basic law on legislation, that will regulate how the Knesset enacts basic laws, so as to prevent a situation where the Knesset changes our constitutional system by a simple majority.

Second: The aggressive process led by Netanyahu, Rothman and Levin underscores the importance of an independent Supreme Court.

Under no circumstances can any consent be given to a situation where the coalition controls the appointment of judges. From here I call on Gantz and Lapid – Do not fall for Bibi's spins and manipulations. And I must add a word about the right-wing demonstration on Thursday: The Minister of Justice stands on

the stage spreading lies about the High Court of Justice, with demonstrators at his feet trampling on pictures of Supreme Court judges – and he expects us to believe him when he says he will protect democracy.

Third: I read in the press that the coalition seeks to complete in the summer session the enactment of the Legal Advisors Law, which will revoke the status of lawyers in civil service as gatekeepers who protect the rule of law. Contrary to the spins you will hear from the coalition, the Legal Advisors Law will not improve governance, but increase corruption. And to illustrate the corruption I'm talking about, let us recall a long-forgotten affair. Tzachi Hanegbi was the Minister of Environmental Protection in the years 2001-2003. Do you know what his greatest achievement as minister was? Not reducing air pollution or improving waste treatment. He managed to bring about the appointment of over 80 Likud Center members and their cronies in the Ministry of Environmental Protection. This is not governance, it is corruption.

The word 'shame' was made for this kind of behavior exactly. This is what we can expect if the Knesset passes the Legal Advisors Law. So if anyone tries to tell you that this is an attempt to improve governance, refer them to the State Controller's report of August 2004 about political appointments at the Ministry of Environmental Protection.

You can find reliable legal information about all of these topics on the website of the Israeli Law Professors' Forum for Democracy, of which I am a member.

The second issue I would like to briefly talk about is the environment.

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In the protests we talk a lot about dangers to Israeli democracy, but the regime coup can also have severe impact on the environment. The Supreme Court is one of the government entities that has protected the environment in Israel more than any other. It is the Supreme Court that ordered, for example, the relocation of the Haifa ammonia tank, and prevented the expansion of the oil refinery. Undermining the independence of the Supreme Court will also impair its ability to protect the environment – mainly against strong corporations.

But the current government is harming the environment also by a series of decisions and other omissions, of which I will list just a few: Despite years of discussions, Israel has no Climate Law. Instead of dealing with the risks entailed by the climate crisis, the Ministry of Energy and the Electric Corporation are busy with providing the Ultra Orthodox with kosher electricity. Have no doubt, that too will be at our expense. The government cancelled the tax on disposable tableware, and the tax on sweetened beverages because of pressure from the ultra orthodox, and finally, the government also undertook to transfer the Green Police under Ben

Gvir. **It turns out that without democracy, there is also no environmental protection.**

The last issue I will address touches on education for democracy. Yuli Yavin, a brave high schooler from Herzliya, recently exposed how the Kohelet Forum planted anti-democratic content in the textbook “Being Citizens in Israel”, which is taught in civic studies classes in schools. This is something that all of us had missed. It turns out that our children do not get proper education about the significance of a real democracy – a democracy of the type we fight for every Saturday here in the demonstration.

I would like to use this stage to call upon our mayor, Shmuel Boxer, to use the excellent people we have in this city – students, educators and academic faculty members – to put together a municipal program for democracy studies.

We do not need to wait for the Ministry of Education – let us take our fate into our own hands and create a unique program for our own city that will reflect Ness Ziona’s commitment to democracy.

Thank you very much.



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NETANYA

Prof. Uriel Reichman Reichman University



On Thursday we heard the voices of incitement from the stage in Jerusalem:

Our courts, they proclaim, defend rapists, support families of terrorists and leave the fate of Jews to the mercy of infiltrators.

Politicians in Israel have been using the tool of incitement for years.

An ultra-Orthodox MK called to burn down the Supreme Court, an MK who lives in a settlement suggested to bring down the Supreme Court with D9 bulldozers, and a Likud MK demanded to lock judges up in internment camps.

Is it any wonder that believers of the “reform” trampled with their feet on pictures of the judges of Israel?

Tehran isn't here yet, but I guarantee you that if Levin's legislation scheme passes, the Supreme Court will no longer be able to prevent the majority in the Knesset from distorting the integrity and credibility of the democratic process, and will no longer be able to safeguard the equality, liberties, right to property and other fundamental rights we citizens have, nor guard even against extreme deviation from government

powers.

Not one but three rose against us, to destroy the Israeli democracy.

The first, Smotrich's party, which assigned the rest of us the role of the Messiah's donkey and is bent on turning Israel into a Halachic state. This entity does not recognize the Declaration of Independence as Israel's instrument of self-determination; objects to equality and to the establishment of a constitution and is taking over law enforcement via the Israel Police Force and the Border Guard.

We will not let them eradicate our democracy.

We will not give them the power to destroy the State of Israel.

The second body is the ultra-orthodox parties.

To them we say today: For seventy-five years we have been toiling relentlessly, heroically sacrificing our lives for the redemption of the people of Israel in the Land of Israel.

For seventy-five years you, on the other hand, have been nurturing nothing but hatred for the Zionist enterprise, while building at our expense segregated, autonomous and exile-perpetuating communities while relegating to us the task of



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defending our nation alone.

Now you have joined the political revolution that will grant you full exemption from military service, payment to reward ultra-orthodox adults for not working, you will have new towns that will be built especially for you, religious law will be applied to contracts and other civil matters, you will have a license for religious discrimination and gender segregation, and above all, you will get huge amounts of money and a lot more. In return, you will make us your subjects, ruled by the tyranny of your majority and your coalition partners.

Not anymore! As of today, there will be a new arrangement between us: no longer a separate autonomy, but rather an equal sharing of both rights and duties.

The third force is Benjamin Netanyahu. He along with Levin, signed the agreements of this disgraceful “revolution” without holding any discussion with their party members.

Israel’s democratic regime is being bartered in exchange for Netanyahu’s escape from justice and his coronation as a the official Israeli Viktor Orbán.

Today we are waging our last democratic battle against religious bigotry and a despicable form of political opportunism. Our fight is literally over the very existence of the Zionist state and Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel.

In this fateful mission, at the dawn of the third and most challenging chapter in Jewish history, we do not have the privilege to fail! We will stop this disgraceful revolution from within! We will establish a constitution for the State of Israel, and we will defend our country and fortify the Zionist enterprise.



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NETANYA

Dr. Meirav Aharon Gutman The Technion – Israel Institute of Technology



**Israeli government, listen up!
I've come to talk to you.**

You talk about security. You talk about walking the streets with dignity, governance and power.

Let's confront power with the truth.

The truth is that you are cowards! These days, hundreds of thousands of families live under economic terror, without salvation.

After paying for education, the mortgage, groceries, after-school activities and car expenses, a young family's salary is gone. Young

couples barely make ends meet. An unexpected car problem or a family celebration send them spiraling down a road of overdrafts and loans. In the four months that you have been in power, these families have collapsed.

Are there any young parents here? Let's confront power with the truth!

You raise your children, and their nanny costs more than your salary. Kindergartens up to the age of 3 are private. You voted for them again because you hoped for security and dignity. They promised us free education for preschoolers. They have been in power for 12 years and four months. Have they supported our children's education? No, they have not!!

All we can say to this government is shame on you!!

Are there any young couples here? Let's confront power with the truth!

You wanted to stay here, in Netanya, near your parents, so they can help you and pick up the kids from kindergarten, to be close to them. You bought an apartment far above your financial means. For 12 years this government has been promising to solve the housing crisis. Have they provided affordable housing? The answer is no!

Shame on you!!

Are there any families here? Let's confront power with the truth!

You elected them, again. They promised to fight the high cost of living, and you believed them. From the ballot box we went straight to the supermarket. We realized that you are paying much more than you should. Two days from now, the prices of dairy products will rise by 16%. You all work hard, but by the time



NO ACADEMIA WITHOUT DEMOCRACY

NETANYA

you reach the cash register you have no choice but to leave out items that you just can't afford. This protest is crying out – **shame on you!**

There are food monopolies in Israel that use economic terror against us every day.

Let's confront power with the truth.

You are afraid of them because they control the media and probably donate money to political parties. Politicians crave working for them, getting golden parachutes, or setting up a job for a family member, a friend or a colleague from their party. At the same time, they are turning us against each other, blinding us with talk about Arabs versus Jews, Ashkenazi versus Mizrahi and religious versus secular. Every time you hear these words, know that the government is guarding these monopolies and creating a diversion so that the financial terror will live on.

I have come here today to remove this diversion: behind all that talk of security and power, stands the weakest government that we have ever known.

From this day forward we will demand free preschool education, affordable housing, public housing and the reduction of the cost of living.

This is the truth of life itself, and our truth shall prevail.



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AFULA

Dr. Faina Milman-Sivan University of Haifa



Good evening, Afula!

I immigrated from the Ukraine when I was four years old, with my parents, Holocaust survivors, and grew up not far from here, in a Project Renewal neighborhood in Kiryat Yam. I have been protesting, together with you, for 17 consecutive weeks; we will continue to protest, for lack of any other choice. We are fighting for the future of our children, we are fighting for life itself. We have woken up.

Let's talk about life itself. We spend most of our time at work. As a researcher of labor law, I invite you to take a look at the future workplace according to the vision of the Kohelet Policy Forum, the architects of the regime overhaul. Let us look at the nightmare from which we have woken up.

In this nightmare of a future, any violation of our rights as employees will be brought before judges who are totally dependent on the Government. The High Court of Justice is often mentioned, but the Coalition's takeover of the Committee for Selecting and Promoting Judges would mean political appointments for all tribunals, including the Labor Court. Let me ask you, what are the chances that a female judge at the Labor Court, who was appointed by the Government and will be promoted by the Government, will rule against the larger employer in Israel – the State? Public institutes currently employ about 18% of Israeli female and male employees. How likely is it that she will rule against the State? Or, for example, against the policy of the National Insurance Institute?

Waking up is our good fortune. According to the nightmare which is planned for us, the road is open for big businesses and the owning class;

they will be able to settle employment disputes in a professional, non-political way through costly private mediations or arbitrations. But what course of action will be available to us, when our employment rights are violated?

Disgraceful work conditions are part of the everyday life of vast sectors in the Israeli society. Are there any police women here tonight? Policemen? Will the establishment of a National Guard strengthen the Police? Take a clear look at reality, at the difficult work conditions in the Israeli police force. It is one of the only western police forces that does not pay for overtime hours, with the only "solution" being permits for a second job, to earn extra income. It is a police force with an unprecedented number of volunteers, and with all due respect, volunteers cannot substitute for professional policing.

The bill which is currently being promoted in respect of the work conditions of policemen is filled with so many holes and exceptions that it is hard to believe that it will result in any improvement. How will the regime overhaul help this issue? If we don't wake up, we might find ourselves with a depleted national police and a strong national guard of the Minister Ben Gvir.

This is not a democracy!

Waking up is our good fortune, because in this nightmare of a future, we will also not be able to go on strike. The Kohelet Forum is promoting the cancellation de facto of the freedom of strike, and the weakening of the freedom of association, all under the guise of enhancing liberty.

In such a world, all of us, including, for example, educators, social workers, medicine and nursing professionals, and yes, also academics – will be less free to act together as a group for our rights and our profession. Reality is, that

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AFULA

also at the workplace, we need decentralization of powers, a “voice” in the making of important decisions which impact our daily lives, a structure known as “industrial democracy”.

How about women? Are there any women here tonight? In the nightmare of a future which is planned for us, gender-based segregation is broadened, no longer limited to national parks, or on buses, but also in academia and eventually at the workplace as well. If the High Court of Justice and the Labor Courts are weakened – who will promote equal pay, fight workplace bullying, insist on stopping the discrimination against women and any other disadvantaged constituency at the workplace? I have no intention to paint an ideal picture of the labor and civil courts. But social justice is not achieved by concentrating all the power in the hands of the Government.

The coalition agreements promise to expand the segregation and continue to disregard professionalism and academic degrees. We recently noticed a wanted ad seeking a construction supervisor, that accepts a background in religious studies instead of a diploma in engineering. This is outright dangerous.

The International Labour Organization warns that only those countries that will improve their system of employee qualification will be able to weather the tsunami of technological changes, AI and so forth – and what does the State of Israel do? Expands subsidies for education systems with no core studies.

What sort of a future is being planned for us? The future Israeli economy will not be able to fund a whole population that takes no part in the work market, but the Government’s policy undertakes to act in the exact opposite direction. To what end? For the promotion of narrow, sometimes

personal, interests of leaders in an extremist government. To that end, they need to shatter any and all centers of power they do not control, debilitate the media, weaken labor unions and yes, the academia as well. To that end they are acting to eliminate any function that limits the government, i.e. weakening democracy –

We will not let it happen!

A clear look at reality is the only way forward towards a sustainable future. The goal is not to reinstate the pre-January 2023 reality. The future of our children requires the anchoring of social rights, a more equal distribution of State resources with an emphasis on the periphery, the social and geographical peripheries, a creative solution for the issue of the Territories and decentralization of governing powers.

This is the only way to promote Goal 8 of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, which were adopted by the University of Haifa: “Promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all”. Studies indicate that only inclusive and diverse workplaces lead to creativity, increased productivity, and no less importantly – mutual acquaintance, recognition and tolerance. **This will also build bridges between all Israeli sectors; this is the future we are fighting for.**

Democracy, by definition, is not a system of “conclusive” winners or losers. The counterparty is not the enemy. Bridges must be built to connect us. We will fight, but not hate. There are wonderful people on the other side as well. I know this, because beloved members of my family are among the protestors in favor of the reform. They are wrong, and misleading, but they are not the enemy. **As someone who has already immigrated once, I have no intention of doing so again. Together we will fight and together we will win. Democracy!**

NO ACADEMIA WITHOUT DEMOCRACY

PETACH
TIKVA

Prof. Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi The Hebrew University of Jerusalem



**Without democracy,
there is no academia.**

Without democracy, there is no academia, because **without freedom, there is no innovation, without criticism, there is no research**, and there can be no criticism where there is a fear of expressing it.

In a dictatorship, the regime shows contempt for professional public service and fears questions. This is not a place in which academia can thrive. It is a place from which great minds escape.

By handing out jobs to cronies, one does not find a cure for cancer, win Nobel Prizes, or create hope for the next generation. We did not come here from the pogroms, the Holocaust, and other dictatorships to become everything we have escaped from; we came here to build a Jewish and democratic society for all.

Good evening Petach Tikva, mother of the moshavot, mother of the protest – I am so moved to see all of you here, having dropped everything else to stand here tonight.

My name is Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and I am a professor of sociology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. My father was born here in Petach Tikva in 1925, to a religious family of 7 children. It was during the time of the struggle for independence, and he and his two brothers joined the Irgun (the Etzel). At the age of 19, he was deported by the British and spent 4 years of exile in Africa, returning only after the establishment of the State of Israel.

On the beach of Tel Aviv, with the remains of the

shelled Altalena in the background, he met my mother, a secular Mapai supporter. Two different ballot votes, one home, and a joint belief in the sanctity of freedom, a belief that democracy is not only the rule of the majority, and that no one should ever have unlimited power.

A long time has passed since then. And as a researcher of memory, I know that we must not forget what happened in all of those fallen democracies when a few people seized too much power. When they de-legitimized anyone



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PETACH
TIKVA

who thought differently. When killings were permissible. When minorities were trampled, when conquests occurred. **We must not forget, because for many years the Jewish people were that minority, and becoming a minority is always a possibility.**

Academia teaches history, economics, sociology, and physics. And mostly asks questions and studies facts, not tempting conspiracy theories. Today, **300 economists from the entire political spectrum warn us that the Israeli economy will collapse without democracy.**

Black is not white. Ignorance is not knowledge. Human rights are not a gift that the regime gives to whomever it chooses and takes away whenever it pleases. We know that power is decentralized only by having three independent branches of government. **We will not let anyone demolish democracy or academia.**

It happened in Hungary. Orbán limited academia right after he took down the judicial system. The strong university moved to Vienna, and 10 out of the 11 Hungarian Nobel Laureates have left their country.

We will not let Netanyahu “Orbán” us. We do not have another academia, and there is no Vienna in our region.

As a former dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, I know that without strong academia there are no opportunities for women and men – orthodox and secular, Jewish and Arab, Sephardic and Ashkenazi – to drive change and generate a new and worthy civil order. Every year of education translates into 10% more in your paycheck. 10%! Education is also the only way for the “Second Israel” (and the Third, and the Fourth) to succeed, to be healthier and more

employed. There are data to support this. And without democracy, there is no academia.

The author Meir Shalev, who passed away two weeks ago, received an honorary doctorate from the Hebrew University in 2019. In his speech, he said: “We are living in a time of choice. What should we choose? The answer is in the Book of Deuteronomy – choose life. Choose education, law, science, and art. Choose the Judaism of Yohanan ben Zakkai, of Amos and Jeremiah. Here, at the top of Mount Scopus, the choice is clearer than ever.”

Here in Petach Tikva and in the dozens of locations around the country, the choice is clearer than ever. We choose to make education accessible. We choose academia. We choose democracy. We will continue coming here, for as long as it takes, until we win. And we will win. Together.

Thank you very much.



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HaGOMME
JUNCTION

Prof. Amir Goldstein Tel-Hai College



Shabbat shalom.

The Ha-Gomme junction has in the last few months become one of the symbols of the struggle against the radical overhaul of the Israeli regime and legal system.

It is impressive to see all the thousands of people who come to this junction. It is heartwarming to be part of the wondrous and exciting mix created here of older and younger inhabitants of the northern part of Israel, men and women from the Higher Galilee area, and students from the Tel-Hai College; all are part of a promising young generation that clearly says:

'You're messing with the wrong generation!'

Why are we here? We are here because the foundations of Israeli society are shaking. We took to the streets because Israel's government has chosen to undermine Israeli nonpartisanship. It is no coincidence that pro-coup protesters have chosen to literally walk over a photo of the Chief Justice. This act was the culmination of a prolonged effort to mark Supreme Court justices as enemies of the people. A great deal of energy is being invested in this mendacious lashing out, including social networks being fed, top-down, with fake news and hatred for the judiciary – only because it is perceived as a significant barrier against this craze for power and tyranny. What this evil government is seeking is judges and justices who are not independent but act as its political extensions.

This great and strong network of protest is the embodiment of the checks and balances that still stand against this dangerous move. From this place, the Ha-Gomme junction, we serve as tailwind for Chief Justice Esther Hayut and all

other faithful civil servants who are doing their duty to uphold the rule of law and not falter before the government's ruthless aggression.

From here we thank and support them – and ask them to carry on, to keep protecting us, all of us, regardless of our religion, race, or gender. We call upon them to keep standing strongly and valiantly against this government's poisonous destruction.

Democracies do not fall in one fell swoop. It is a gradual process in which the foundations are attacked and eroded until they bend and finally fall. The academia is such a foundation, a pillar of Israel's democracy; as such it may expect increasingly virulent attacks. Our academia – which offers education and the potential for social mobility, uplifts the human spirit, and constitutes one of the most wondrous drivers of human growth ever created in Israel (and is perceived as such throughout the developed world) – is this malicious government's next target. To gain unlimited power and make the masses believe lies and propaganda, one requires ignorance and loyalty. **The academia, stronghold of the freedoms of speech and of thought, which so heavily relies on the capacity to maintain unthreatened skepticism and critical thinking, will inexorably become the next focus of efforts in this attempt to destroy all remaining nonpartisanship in the Israeli collective.**

A corrupt and despotic regime will not stop at judges and justices whose strings it can pull; the government will also want to decide what is being taught and by whom; and to understand the selection criteria we need only look around us – here in Israel or in not-so-far Hungary. Only those reciting the right messages,

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those who agree to serve as megaphones for lies and deceit, those who actually choose to laud the political power, will get the public resources. Free academia shall be marked as an enemy and stripped of resources. **We are here to stand guard, because without democracy there can be no academia, and without an independent academia there can be no democracy.**

Tel-Hai College sees Kiriat Shmona as its hometown, the basis for the future University of the Galilee. Tel-Hai and all other higher education institutions are required to perform constant, ongoing soul-searching and self-control, and most of all they must launch a clear process of diversification and broadening of their ranks.

For the struggle over the regime coup also has a social context, one that has to do with the very social contract in Israel's society, whose gaps we must all strive to bridge. My wife, Sigal, and myself both grew up in Kiriat Shmona and dedicated most of our years to local community work. We are both strongly connected to Kiriat Shmona and, like many others, believe that this town needs consistent reinforcement. There are those who take advantage of these real social gaps and use them to depict Israel as a collection

of rival sectors – and then, instead of working to reduce the gaps, leverage them as a never-ending source of hatred. Our only answer to that is to show our utmost respect for the attitudes and feelings of those who disagree with us, as part of our unwavering pursuit of the common good.

We are demonstrating here, at Ha-Gomme junction, because as citizens who deeply cherish our Israeli society we simply have no other choice. Our achievements so far are impressive. Together we brandish the flag of the free Israel, re-endowing its blue-and-white colors with all their profound original values – freedom, equality, and humanistic Zionism. We are not naïve. We know only too well that the government has only folded temporarily – and only because we left it no other choice. Next week, the Knesset's summer session is about to start, and the coalition may complete the coup in 24 hours. Should that happen, this network of regular demonstrations shall serve as a base for the millions who will take to the streets.

Anyone who challenges Israeli democracy will find us here, at the Ha-Gomme junction and throughout the country, standing as a fortified wall.



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HaOGEN
JUNCTION

Prof. Gitai Yahel Ruppin Academic Center



Good evening.

My name is Gitai Yahel, I live in Kfar Vitkin and I am a researcher and professor of oceanography at the School of Marine Science of the Ruppin Academic Center.

I stand here today together with you and with senior faculty members of all the academic institutions in Israel, who are protesting and demonstrating in 34 other locations across the country.

We have come to remind all of us what it is that we have been fighting for, for more than three months now, and what we are up against.

Make no mistake: This is not an attempt to improve the legal system, it's also not "just" an attempt to take it over, it's not even "just" an attempt to instigate a regime overturn and turn the state of Israel into a religious autocracy. We are facing an all-out attack against facts, against values, and against truth itself.

What we are fighting for:

We are fighting for our country to be steered based on facts, rationalism, skepticism, education and enlightenment!

We are fighting for a democratic, just, moral, tolerant, and pluralistic country that is a true home for all its citizens and for all the diverse sectors of the Jewish people!

We are fighting for a country that is founded on the principles of liberty, justice and peace in light of the vision of the prophets of Israel!

We are fighting for a country that upholds complete equality of social and political rights for all its citizens, irrespective of religion, race and sex!

And we are fighting for a country that ensures freedom of religion (and freedom from religion), freedom of conscience, language, education and culture for all its citizens!

All of these values are now under a full-blown attack on multiple fronts!

Who and what we are up against:

We are up against a corrupt alliance between power-hungry politicians, convicted criminals, criminal defendants, and racist Jewish supremacists.

This alliance is led by religious extremists who have monopolized Judaism, morals and faith, and their goal runs much deeper than their allies': They are striving to establish a Torah state, a theocracy like Iran or Saudi Arabia.

These groups, each for its own reasons, have intimidated, incited and lied to entire sectors of Israeli society and they are dragging them down, and us along with them, toward the physical and total annihilation of the Zionist project. We won't let them!

Most of their supporters are good people. Some of them are unsuspecting believers, some feel excluded and disfavored and looking for vengeance, and some, unfortunately, are the product of parts of the Israeli education system which have undergone and are still undergoing a hostile takeover by religious, nationalist and antidemocratic factions.

We are facing an all-out attack against the values of equality, freedom and human rights and are up against a brutal attempt to subject all these values to values of Jewish supremacy and a warped version of Judaism.

And we know history and see the laws, the

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coalition agreements and what the coalition's members are writing and saying. The regime overturn that they are spearheading will not stop with the judiciary. No, no, no – this is just the beginning!

We know full well what the next stages of this attack against the truth are going to be:

Once they are done debilitating the judiciary, their next targets will be the free media, investigative journalism and academia!

In fact, all of these institutions are already facing an aggressive attack right now:

Look at Channel 14 and Israel HaYom.

Look at the attempts to take over the Central Bureau of Statistics and the National Council for Higher Education.

Friends, a brain drain of unprecedented proportions is underway as we speak. I have never been asked to write so many letters of recommendation for young and promising scientists who are seeking their future elsewhere, as in the past three months. If these dangerous trends are not stopped, the next generation of researchers, scientists, and intellectuals will be looking for safer, freer and more enlightened places to live.

The roadmap lies before our very eyes:

Without freedom there is no academia;

Without free academia there is no critical thinking and no intellectuals;

Without free academia there are no high-tech, cleantech, blue-tech, biotech, and agritech – the basis for Israel's economy;

Without free academia we would lose our technological edge over our enemies.

Even those who are willing or even want to live here under a religious theocracy must understand that without democracy, without an independent judiciary and without free academia, our villa in the Middle Eastern jungle would cease to exist.

And that is why we are here and we'll continue to be here and anywhere else and fight with all the legal means available to us to reverse these dangerous directions and turn the State of Israel into a more enlightened country that will truly be a light unto the nations.

Because we have no other country!



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KIRYAT
ONO

Prof. Sheizaf Rafaeli Shenkar College



Good evening, Kiryat Ono!

Academia and democracy have always walked hand in hand.

One is a condition for the other, and when one is threatened, the other comes to its defense.

Democracy needs an educated people, and an educated people needs democracy. That's why I am here.

I would like to open with the words of the late Meir Shalev in the ceremony where he was awarded an honorary doctorate at the Weizmann Institute of Science.

Shalev titled his speech:



“The wise are not silent at this time.”

This title is a paraphrase of the words of the prophet Amos, perhaps history's first oppositionist prophet. Shalev said:

“The wise at this time shall shout, object, protest. The wise at this time knows that he – the teacher, the scientist, the student, the researcher – ... is the only hope for the survival, prosperity, security, economy, citizens' health and future of this country.”

So, we, too, in academia, have left our ivory tower, exchanging it for an illuminated and involved lighthouse. This lighthouse is necessary to banish the darkness that threatens us.

How simple yet horrifying it is: our democracy is threatened by growing darkness.

We are here to stop the hurried and tyrannic attempt by an unworthy group to impose darkness where there is still a great light of creativity, research and study.

What are we crying out, objecting, and protesting against?

We protest against what this vile all-right coalition is trying to do. A coalition that needs to be called by its name: a gang of convicted criminals and criminal defendants, racists and service-evaders, potty-mouthed and hypocrites, bullies and cowards, ignoramuses and misogynists. Hallucinatory and violent messianic inciters and instigators.

They are trying to fast-track a barrage of over one hundred and fifty laws and countless decisions and actions that violate the most basic principles of democracy.

They are trying to eradicate the checks and balances, that are so crucial, so

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fundamental, so universal. In their irresponsible race, they hide beneath the veil of a false and despicable “reform”. They think the people are stupid.

They chose the wrong people. These people are educated, and they know that this is not really a reform. It’s a Regime Coup, and it can only succeed if the people are ignorant.

One hundred and fifty senseless, unreasonable and anti-democratic bills, and a tangible erosion of everything that was built here, in our beloved homeland.

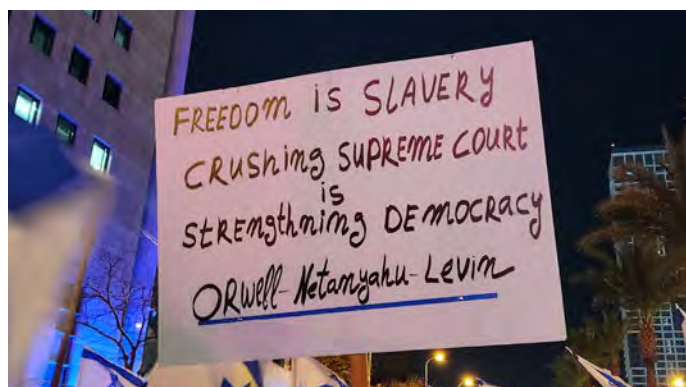
Without democracy, there is no academia, and without academia, I’m afraid there is no democracy.

A good academia is curiosity, a quest for truth, love of knowledge, and an appreciation of intellect and wisdom.

Those who seek to abolish the “Reasonableness Doctrine” are simply enemies of common sense.

Nothing is further from curiosity, pursuit of truth, or sound reasoning than the actions of the evil and disastrous government under the guise of “reform”: it is nothing but disgrace and failure.

When creativity is stifled, and the freedom of expression is violated, when academic freedom is compromised, when there is no understanding



that basic literacy is essential for the survival of modern society, when the aspiration for equality fades away, when scientists and their research are belittled, when education budgets are slashed in order to fund unrealistic militias – **this is failure.**

Let us talk for a moment about failure.

120 days have passed since the inception of the reign of the “Power, Honor, Money” coalition. 120 days. That’s one third of a year.

So, here is the first trimester report card:

Failed, Failed, Failed. A government of evil and disaster. A failure.

They have failed even their own ludicrous goal of “Money, Honor, and Power” – there is no power, no money, and certainly no honor.

This government has:

- **Failed** in the economy;
- **Failed** in defense;
- **Failed** in defeating terrorism;
- **Failed** in transportation;
- **Failed** in personal security;
- **Failed** in civics;
- **Failed** in foreign relations and international standing;
- **Failed** in treating others with kindness and the weak and foreigners within us with compassion;
- **Failed** in welfare;
- **Failed** in the delicate fabric of social solidarity;
- **Failed** in equal distribution of the burden;
- **Completely failed** in simply telling the truth;
- and even **Failed** in order and cleanliness.

An all-failed grade sheet.

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With such a report card, our teachers would have said: they may be able to advance to the next grade, but not in our school.

But what did they do? I'll tell you a bit from our perspective, the perspective of education and academia. Also in our playing field, of creativity and invention, innovation and entrepreneurship: they Failed. Let's take a look:

- Cutting core studies;
- Condescending and cancelling attitude towards experts like economists and jurists;
- Casting doubt on scientific consensus, such as evolution or climate change;
- Threatening the independence of the National Library;
- Blatant intervention in curriculums;
- Gross distortion of textbooks;
- Attempts at dismissal of teachers who don't fall in line with their agenda;
- Politicization of high-level appointments in education, causing brain drain of outstanding researchers and lecturers – a tragedy for generations to come;
- Cancellation of conferences and loss of international funding;
- Erosion and threat to women's and LGBTQ+ rights;
- Gender segregation and discrimination in teaching and studying;
- An affront on common sense.

Or, in short: less and less democracy.

Do you know that Meir Shalev received another honorary doctorate? This time from the Hebrew University. In his speech there he said:

“These are days of decision, days of choice... What should the choice be? The answer is in the Book of Deuteronomy – Choose life. Choose education, justice, science, art, the Judaism of Yohanan Ben Zakkai, of Amos and Jeremiah, not of Elazar Ben Yair... The choice is clearer than ever.”

**There is no democracy without education.
There is no education without democracy.**

What is happening to security, the economy, and the justice system is clear to everyone. Today, I cry also for what is happening to education, research, study and creativity.

We, in academia, are probably next in line to be trampled by the 9D bulldozers of the geniuses in the coalition.

Not a “slippery slope” nor “on the brink of catastrophe”, but a freefall. We are the reserve parachute, and we need to open it.

Thanks to this wonderful protest, we will have the power to stop this reckless tyranny.

Revolutions are not necessarily a bad thing. We had Herzl, Ben-Gurion and Ben-Yehuda, who transformed reality, revived the Hebrew language, and established a state. This state needs to and can be repaired today:

We can look reality in the eye. Take the first step towards peace, equality, joint shouldering of the burden and a constitution. Restore sanity and dialogue.

Remove the atmosphere of incitement and lies.

This disastrous coalition is trying to change the rules of the game. But they went out looking for kingdom and will get donkeys. In the aftermath of this change, they will never have a moment of peace from us. None

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of their recent furtive actions will change this. They cowardly run away from conventions and memorials. They withdraw bills and dismissal notices at the last moment, trying to apply salami tactics to us. But all of this is minor. They will not deceive us.

Here's a civics lesson. I will speak slowly and at dictation pace:

**We will not be violent,
but we will not be silent either.**

**We will not incite and lie like them,
but we will not be polite.**

We accept the majority decision. We are willing to listen, not just to be heard.

But we demand civil and minority rights. We insist on the vital separation of powers, and insist on the necessity of an independent judicial system. Anyone who doesn't understand this is a fool. Anyone who threatens these, threatens us.

We have the veto right on changing the regime, and an obligation to ourselves and the future generations to teach and educate, shape and preserve a properly-functioning relationship between the citizens and the state.

You know, the Age of Enlightenment is also called the Age of Reason.

Reason gives light and banishes darkness. Anyone who is against reason is, by definition, unenlightened.

I opened this speech with the important prophecy of Amos: "The wise are not silent at this time".

One hundred and twenty years ago, Shaul Tchernichovsky wrote a prophecy of comfort in his poem "Sachki Sachki" (Laugh, Laugh):

*"Then my people will also blossom,
and a generation will arise in the land,
that will cast off the chains that bound it,
and it will see the light eye-to-eye."*

**We, the protest, will see the light.
We will also show the light.**

**We will stay alert. We will be a lighthouse.
We shall win.**

**Academia and democracy have always walked
hand in hand.**

**And when one is threatened,
the other comes to its defense.**



NO ACADEMIA WITHOUT DEMOCRACY

ROSH
HaAYIN

Prof. Daphna Hacker Tel Aviv University



Good evening, Rosh HaAyin! It's so good to see you all tonight!

Why have we been demonstrating, week after week, for the past 17 weeks?

Why have we been sacrificing our Saturday nights, when we could be doing a thousand other things? Because the coalition wants to change the rules of the democratic game, and because we will not be fooled, lied to, lulled into a false sense of security –

We won't let it happen!

At the demonstration in support of the pretend-reform this week, we heard the speakers utter the word 'democracy', but when they say 'democracy' they take us for fools, they think we can't tell the difference between a democracy and a dictatorship. They want to control the appointment of judges, control legal advisors, legitimize corruption and place themselves above the law – there is no dictionary definition under which, with all of this taking place, a country

is called and remains a democracy. We know this, **which is why we will not let the regime overturn go through! We won't let it happen!**

The speakers in the support demonstration organized by the Government for the Government, also repeated the claim that the people want a reform. Yet another lie from the coalition's lie fabricating machine, because nobody had told the people before the elections that the administration wants to demolish democracy. Some of the Ultra-Orthodox want a halachic state; some of the ultranationalist orthodox want a halachic state and apartheid state; some in the far-right want to revoke elections altogether and have a full-fledged dictatorship.

But the majority of the people? The majority of the people want to be able to make ends meet and not be shocked by every grocery bill! The majority of the people want security on the roads and in the streets, rather than feeling like they live in a jungle of violence! The majority



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of the people want religious liberty at home, in synagogues and in schools, but not a halachic state that is controlled by rabbis, sucks money off of secular people for the benefit of ultra-orthodox people who don't work, and subjects women to medieval rules of modesty.

This coalition, led by extremists, wants to turn Israel into a hybrid of Hungary and Saudi Arabia, and **we won't let them!**

There is a great deal to be fixed in Israel in order for us to have true equality, true diversity, true social justice. But it is rather the Knesset and the Government which have not adopted the bill for Basic Law: Equality, nor the bill for Basic Law: Social Rights. So let them stop selling us lies about equality, diversity and social justice.

The Kohelet Forum, which drafted the pretend legal reform, cares for the rich and abandons everyone else, objecting to public housing, the increase of minimum wages, better access to healthcare in peripheral areas, support of single-parent families, subsidization of free

early childhood education, and tax exemptions for people with disabilities. **The Kohelet Forum is shameful and its influence over this Government is shameful!**

With all the failures that remain to be fixed, the State of Israel is a miracle. A tiny country, at the heart of a hostile region, whose population has grown at a remarkable pace, with no natural resources to speak of. **How did this miracle happen? How have we become a thriving country? Thanks to democracy!**

I don't have time to speak about all the things that we will lose if the overturn the coalition is attempting to promote goes through, so I will only mention several major losses.

Without democracy there is no army of the people – Imagine the IDF as an army of mercenaries acting for the government. Have you seen what happened two days ago in Hungary, the very country that serves as an inspiration for reform supporters? After the dismissal of hundreds of senior officers in February, the



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coalition in Hungary removed the Chief of the General Staff from office this week, without providing any explanation. A country where the administration fires numerous officers in order to appoint loyalist officers is not a democracy. **We won't let our democracy be destroyed; we won't let the IDF be destroyed!**

Without democracy, there is no economic prosperity – There is a direct and established link between the existence of a democratic regime and economic prosperity. Entrepreneurs, investors, and excellent employees flee undemocratic countries, because, given a choice – decent and sane people don't want to do business and live in a dictatorship. Hundreds of economists in Israel and around the world, including Kohélet's economist who resigned once he realized what was going on here, are cautioning against the implications of the destruction of democracy for the economy. This government will not listen. Within the space of several months, it has managed to cause

immense economic damage. They are now going to try to pass a budget at the Knesset, and they want to impose more taxes on us in order to cover the economic damage that they are causing – **We won't have it!**

Without democracy, there is no academia – We've seen what has happened in Hungary: Members of faculty dismissed, universities closed down, free speech suppressed. And why is it that without academia there is no prosperity? Because without academia there is no research, no high tech, no state-of-the-art medicine, no military innovation, no proper legal system, no people who learn to think outside the box. Dictatorships, nationalists and ultra-orthodox rabbis don't want people to think, they want people to obey. Ignorance is the fuel of antidemocratic leaders and rulers. And that is why this coalition's next target will be academia. Instead of exempting all undergrad students from tuition in the interest of true equality, they



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will certify study programs that do not actually teach anything. **We won't let our democracy be destroyed; we won't let academia be destroyed!**

Without democracy, there is no equality –

In Israel, women make less money than men, suffer from domestic violence, are underrepresented in the seats of power and are discriminated against in religious courts. Yet, instead of rectifying all of this, this coalition wants to harm women ever more. The current inflated coalition, with 80 Knesset Members and Ministers, has only 11 women. There is only one woman among the 25 Directors General of the government ministries. The present coalition is promoting a change of the Prohibition on Discrimination in the Provision of Services Law, so that any service provider will be able to refuse to serve a woman in general and a woman who is not dressed modestly in particular; it is promoting a law that will allow segregation between women and men, so that any person,

business or town will be able to decide that women will be seated separately, in the back, or will not be able to participate at all. The present coalition wants to expand the powers of religious courts, so that they will also have the power to arbitrate any civil case. The present coalition agreements contain a promise that Israel will not join the Istanbul Convention to fight against violence against women and the Minister of National Security is opposed to a law for effective electronic monitors against violent men. This coalition wants a weak legal system because it doesn't want there to be anyone to stop the infringement of the right to equality of women, minorities and political dissenters – this is a dictatorship, **and we won't have it!**

Democracy is the oxygen without which we cannot breathe. We will fight for it with no fear, no despair and no compromise!



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ROSH
PINA

Prof. Nir Becker Tel Hai Academic College



Good evening, Rosh Pina.

And good evening Hatzor HaGlilit and Safed and everyone who's come here from anywhere else.

Good evening, Week 17, and we will go on until the end. We will not give up.

I have come here tonight to speak as a representative of academia in this area. To tell you how important democracy is for academia to be able to continue to do its job. To reiterate something extremely simple: Without democracy there is no academia! At least not as we've known it so far. And without academia we have no future that even remotely resembles what we've had so far. It is for this, among other things, that we must fight.

As a professor of economics, I could give you an hour-long lecture about what we all already know. We know it from the field. You don't need to be a professor of economics nor a student of economics to understand what would happen here without democracy. It's already beginning to happen. But I want to talk a little bit about why it's important for all of us that academia be strong and free.

I will start with a short excerpt from an email one of our Deans in Tel Hai received from a candidate to whom we had offered a position. He is an Israeli who teaches at the University of California and wants to come back to Israel, to the Galilee.

"Thank you for understanding. We still want and intend to return to Israel. As I mentioned in the previous message, we are extremely worried about the situation and processes that have been taking place and escalating in recent months. In many conversations that we've had with family, friends and people in academia, what we hear,

even from people who have never spoken this way before, is: Hold off on the decision to return to Israel".

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, and this is only the beginning. Not only will people stop coming here. People who are here will also start asking themselves: Why stay? Tolerance has its limits too. That's right, not for everyone.

There are some for whom there is no other country. But there are some who say to themselves: We will not be willing to continue living here at any cost.

Over the years, we've managed to build and maintain a just civil society that will accept any person as such; see to it that the Jewish people have a state that can keep watch and not stand idly by at the sight of any injustice. But we've managed to do more than that. We've managed to create a model society to which many around the world look up. A society that has managed to turn into a country that ranks 26th in product per capita out of the world's 193 countries. And guess what one of the primary reasons for this is? That's right. Strong academia. Independent academia. Free academia. Academia which educates generations of young people to ask questions, test the limits and look for ways to break through them.

It is for this that we are fighting. We are not here to fight for the purposes of a messianic, racist, misogynistic bunch, who, by means of a corrupt political alliance, have taken a free ride with a distraught criminal defendant and want to demolish everything that has been built here so far.

April this year has seen two holidays of liberty. The historic holiday of liberty,

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Passover, and the national holiday of liberty, Independence Day. Liberty! What a word. It's hard to understand the importance of liberty 'till it's gone, as goes Joni Mitchell's song, by which time it's too late.

In international conferences, when I talk to my colleagues from Turkey and China, and yes, even Syrian, Iranian and Vietnamese colleagues – they all live in a mock democracy. I ask them what it means to be living like this. The answer, usually, is that in many aspects, there is no difference. Everything works as if it were a free country. Except for one thing. You cannot speak against the regime. And if you do speak, you may get arrested within a short while. **And don't tell me that it cannot happen here. It will happen unless we fight now.**

Our friends were killed trying to defend our country. Our parents immigrated here and fought to build this country. They fought for Zionism. For the Jews to have a state. A state that would be the state of the Jews but would also be a democratic free state. It is this that they fought for and now it's our turn to fight. It is a different

war because it's a war for an idea. **But without freedom this would be a different country altogether and we won't let it happen.**

I wish I could tell you what the future holds. I can't. There is so much uncertainty; now more than ever. But what I do know is that those same values of strength and determination that have led us to fight for this country are the ones that will help us weather the impending storm.

And one of the hallmarks of that strength and determination is what we are seeing here today and have been seeing in recent months. Yes, you! Us!

Together, we've recently had no little success and the truth is that I am optimistic. **I'm optimistic because when I look at everyone here, I know that the sky is the limit. And the sky today above Rosh Pina and dozens of other places in Israel are the highest and brightest.**

Good evening everyone and thank you.



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RISHON
LeTSIYON

Prof. Yoram Rabin The College of Management Academic Studies



**Ladies and gentlemen,
Good evening.**

I stand before you today as the representative of the Israeli academia. As I speak, senior members of Israeli academia are gathering in 33 different locations throughout Israel, from Kiriath Shmona in the North to Eilat in the South. They include Nobel prize laureates, Israel prize winners, EMET prize recipients, former and current presidents and rectors of universities and colleges – and they are all here to say: **there is no academia without democracy.**

The protest over the attempted regime coup in Israel is one of the miracles of our time; it sets an example of worldwide importance of an uprising of a people that demands to protect its democracy and the freedom of its citizens. The initiators of the regime coup did not imagine that their dangerous attempt would trigger such a popular uprising in such widespread dimensions:

Long weeks of popular rallies and demonstrations throughout the country and an uprising of entire sectors of the population – the



legal profession, top economists, the top of the high-tech industry, former and current defense and security figures, air force and ground forces reservists, mayors and heads of municipalities, press and academia opinion leaders, and so many more. Clearly, the politicians behind this fatuous attempt poked the proverbial bear, a public that discovered in itself a determination it did not know it had, to protect values which for so many years had seemed obvious.

The popular uprising that swept the entire nation is the ultimate proof that the so-called “empty wagon” is not empty but in fact full with the values of democracy, liberalism, humanism – and a profound longing to see human rights being protected by government powers, and mostly by the Supreme Court.

Israeli author David Grossman aptly put it when he explained that the public refused to submissively accept the “empty wagon” metaphor and initially did not recognize its own inner desire for freedom. **“We did not fathom how powerful and deeply embedded was our love for our own Israeli being, our own Israeliness”.**

Already in 1748, the age of Enlightenment, French philosopher Charles Louis Montesquieu – who observed the constitution of English democracy from across the English Channel – wrote in his important book ‘*The Spirit of the Laws*’:

“He who seeks a moderate regime must set things up so that power blocks power”.

And indeed, the separation of powers – the decentralization and division of government into three distinct branches – is one of the fundamental principles of democracy. Centralizing all powers in the hands of a

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single branch – the executive – at the expense of the legislature and the judiciary, constitutes a clear and present danger to democracy. The state of Israel has no complex mechanisms that could allow an efficient separation of powers; Menahem Begin already explained this in 1952, in his essay Basic Outlines of Our Life Worldview and Our National Outlook:

“An independent judiciary is liberty’s last stronghold. As long as it stands, it may be possible to repel the muddy surge; but when the stronghold falls, there’s no-one to save those who are crushed by the millstones of rulership.”

That is why the court must remain strong and independent, and its judges must not blindly follow the political echelon. We are here to make sure of that.

This marvelous protest – which seeks to preserve Israel’s democratic regime, maintain the separation of powers, protect the Court’s independence, and preserve checks and balances – is not a mere footnote but a glorious chapter in the history of Israeli democracy.

Let us hope the day will come when we see the central powers in Israeli society joining hands and drafting an Israeli Constitution, one that is based on democratic principles, universal Jewish values, the separation of powers, and the principles of the Declaration of Independence.

But we also fear that the protest might dwindle and that the government might be lurking for any opportunity to bring its series of “prefabricated” bills to a vote. Indeed, we are not yet clear of the danger, we are not out of the woods yet. That is why I stand here to applaud and support each and every one of you. You have woken up, you

contribute time, give effort and sacrifice comfort, you rise to the challenge at hand and meet the need of the hour. Well done.

And although we recently celebrated our 75th Independence Day, it’s lyrics from a Hanukkah song that seem to be in order now :

*We came to banish darkness,
Carrying light and fire.
Each of us is a small candle,
But together we are a strong light.
Away darkness! move on blackness!
Flee before the light!*

Good evening to you all, I wish you strength and valor. May our efforts be fruitful, may we bring the light.



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REHOVOT

Prof. Adi Kimchi Weizmann Institute of Science



Good evening Rehovot and its vicinity,

I am delighted to be here with you.

I am Adi Kimchi, a professor at the Weizmann Institute of Science. I study the functioning of cells in our body in conditions of health and disease, and for the past three decades, I have been advising and nurturing generations of talented graduate students.

I was born and raised in Israel, and it is here that I raise with love my children and grandchildren. Today, I stand before you with great concern to sound the alarm regarding the severe damage that the Israeli academia is facing due to the government's attempts to carry out a regime overhaul.

And I say to you:

Without democracy, there is no academia!

Science and technology in Israel are among the best in the world, a source of great pride! We have excellent universities, colleges, and research institutions that form the backbone of the economy, industry, medicine, agriculture, and culture in our country. **And we owe this**

to academic freedom, which allows us to explore scientific truth with transparency, with equality, and based on professional considerations only, unconditionally!!!

To my dismay, the events of the past 122 days threaten all these achievements. When we consider together all the draft laws that have been put on the table, a clear dangerous trend emerges of the government's aim to take over the judicial system, infringe on civil rights, exclude women, take over the media and the police, and officially establish the unequal sharing of the burden.

Academia is the government's next target, as already declared by several senior government ministers, among them Yariv Levin. It is not surprising since **academia, with its free and critical research, poses a threat to non-democratic regimes.**

Therefore, I foresee:

1. Government intervention in the curriculum and research directions of universities, taking control over the Council for Higher Education, easy targets since university budgets depend



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on government funding.

2. Changes in the composition of university faculty, including cutting posts for women, Arabs, LGBTs... How? Through the politicization of appointing committees in academia, intentions that have already been suggested.

At this point I want to emphasize: Israeli academia promotes and nurtures its members based on their talent, with transparent and well-defined criteria regardless of gender, religion, or race. Non-professional political appointments will push academia into the abyss.

Further harm will come from the international community, which will reduce funding and investments in research and development, leading to a brain drain from the country. It is a very gloomy picture indeed.

Some of you surely wonder: Am I exaggerating? And my answer is: **Absolutely not.** There is a living example of what happened and is happening in Hungary. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán carried out a regime overhaul through a series of similar steps. He began by taking control of the Supreme Court and, along with enacting additional laws, led to a severe blow to academic freedom and the autonomy of the Hungarian academia. These steps included political intervention in content, sanctions on faculty members, dismissals, political appointments, and the privatization of universities to avoid public criticism.

Additionally, an official statement was recently issued by the European Union addressed to all academic institutions in Europe to cut off immediately all contact with universities and technology bodies in Hungary, meaning

complete isolation of the Hungarian academia.

For the Hungarians, it is too late to turn back the wheel. We, in contrast, are still at a stage where we can prevent the foreseeable collapse of our academia. We will continue our tireless public struggle, even if it is prolonged and exhausting, utilizing all the means at our disposal.

We will not relent until we stop this regime overhaul for the sake of our children's future.

We must do everything, truly everything, to stop this madness.

Without democracy, there is no academia!



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RAMAT
HaSHARON

Prof. Amit Schejter Oranim College



Good evening,

Top members of Israeli academia are attending 35 demonstrations held tonight throughout the country, to declare in unison –

without democracy there can be no academia.

I was pleased to be invited to speak here, in Ramat HaSharon. My name is Amit Schejter, I am a researcher in law and communications at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, and I currently also serve as President of the Oranim College, near the town of Tivon. But Ramat Ha Sharon is my hometown and alma mater. I attended the former elementary school Neve Magen; and I graduated from Rotberg High School when no other high schools even existed in Ramat HaSharon; and last but certainly not least, I am a proud graduate of the Neve Magen Scouts Group.

We are here at these demonstrations tonight, all over the country, because the conspiracy to annihilate Israel's democracy will also annihilate Israeli academia – its capacities, achievements, and international standing. Israel's science and scientific achievements are recognized all over the world, and Israeli scientists receive the most prestigious awards, lecture in the most important conferences, publish in the most distinguished journals and are regularly invited to attend, to teach, and to conduct research in the most prominent leading institutions.

Such a level of achievement can only be reached and maintained if we preserve our democracy. And that is, precisely, what we have come here to demand today – **democracy**.

Many thousands of people, possibly millions, all around the country, are willing to swallow the lie

that “democracy means a majority rule”.

But democracy is much more than that. In a democracy, the majority principle is what governs the regular and ongoing decision-making process – but make no mistake, it is but a technical mechanism. Democracy consists of values, without which a majority decision is a lie.

Two basic conditions must be met for a majority decision to be a true decision: all votes must be equal, and it must be possible to argue, to present opposing opinions, to convince.

To qualify as a democracy, the system must also include equality, freedom of speech, freedom of opinion, and freedom of thought – or it is not a democracy!

And who must control the government and the parliament to make sure that we are not deprived of our freedoms and liberties? Only one institution is qualified to do that: the Court.

What is the first thing you must do to deprive



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the public of freedom and equality? Kill the legal system.

And then, when the courts have turned into servile followers, the legislature can pass all the mad laws it desires!

The ultimate purpose that underlies this coup is the annihilation of the judiciary's capacity to control the government and the parliament.

This government, since its creation, has submitted to the Knesset no less than 153 – I repeat the figure, one hundred and fifty-three! – different bills that undermine the very foundations of democracy. Only one word applies here – **SHAME!**

Let me illustrate by giving a few examples of such proposed bills that undermine freedom of speech, freedom of thought, and equality:

- A law which allows to retract budgets from academic institutions where support was voiced for actions that are “contrary to State Principles”. What principles exactly? The principles of canceling the judiciary?
- A bill that proposes to close Israel's Public Broadcasting Corporation. Is there any Western democratic state which does not have a public broadcasting corporation?
- A law that imposes Jewish religious studies in all schools, according to a curriculum that is personally decided by the Minister of Education! Have you ever seen a democratic state where the Minister decides on the curriculum?
- A bill that proposes to forbid primary schools from holding ANY educational activity that relates in any way to sexual tendencies or gender identity.

- A bill that proposes to strengthen the politicians' control over the National Library! Would you now also tell us which books to read?
- A bill forbidding anyone from helping those wishing to explore a non-religious lifestyle... all while Jewish “rebirth” is not only allowed but even has a specific budget line!

Does that not sound mad? Are you completely out of your minds?

Without a strong and independent judiciary there will be no-one to stop these laws, no-one to determine that they violate the basic rights guaranteed by democracy, no education system worthy of its name, no free media, no unrestricted access to information, and no real academia – because without democracy there can be no academia.

The opposite is also true. Without academia there can be no democracy. There can be no democracy without students of history, without people who are capable of expressing themselves in a rich and precise language, or without scholars who are capable of identifying social processes, understand the various facets and intricacies of the democratic regime, and are committed to truth and to the principles of justice. Most of all, there can be no democracy without free and unthreatened scientific research, and without an ongoing accumulation of systematically-acquired knowledge.

People say that the academia is an ivory tower. Well, **we have stepped down from the ivory tower and joined the lines of protest – because without a strong academia there will be no democracy here, and without democracy there can be no academia.**

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RA'ANANA

Prof. Ruth Halperin-Kaddari Bar-Ilan University



Good evening Ra'anana,

Thank you for inviting me, following our national commemoratives – starting with the Holocaust Remembrance Day, through Memorial Day, and culminating with Independence Day, and towards the beginning of the summer session of the Knesset.

I stand here as a woman, a feminist, a religious individual. I stand here as a law lecturer and researcher, and as a member of the Israeli Law Professors' Forum for Democracy.

I stand here as a member of academia, as part of a large-scale event in which thirty-five senior faculty members, men and women, hold public speeches tonight throughout the country.

I stand here as a mother and a grandmother, and above all, I stand here as an Israeli citizen, a second-generation Holocaust survivor, who never envisaged having any other home.

And within each one of these identities, I am anxious.

I am anxious as a woman and a feminist because this government has declared war on women, a government that is almost devoid of women, that is working to expand the powers of the rabbinical courts and obstructing measures aimed at combating violence against women as well as domestic violence. Women in Israel today face a threat to their status, their rights, their future, and the future of their daughters, which is the greatest since the establishment of the State.

I am anxious as a religious woman because a racist and misogynist government that promotes laws of discrimination and exclusion based on gender and national affiliation, all in the name of

religious faith, such a government is taking the name of God in vain and is acting in the name of a Jewish religion which is not my Judaism.

I am anxious as a law lecturer and researcher because stripping the High Court of Justice of its power will leave us all defenseless against human rights violations committed by a government with a lust for power that knows no restraints.

I am anxious as a member of academia because this government threatens academic freedom, and without academic freedom, there is no academia.

I am anxious as a mother because for the first time in my life, I have doubts about my children's future here.

Therefore, as an Israeli who will never envisage any other homeland, I take part in demonstrations every Saturday evening, for seventeen consecutive weeks, because I know full well, and like me, hundreds of thousands of Israeli women and men know that, on the day after the judicial overhaul, Israel will remain "democratic" only in name and outer appearance, but in its essence and content, it will be dreadfully akin to authoritarian regimes. Such an Israel is no longer the State our parents dreamed of and built after the War, and it is not the country I wish for my children and grandchildren to grow up in.

For me, and for hundreds of thousands of Israeli women and men, this miracle that we call the State of Israel, which celebrated its 75th anniversary this week, is too dear for us to accept Israel's becoming a non-democratic, anti-liberal State, which turns its back on the fundamental principles it committed to in its Declaration of Independence: freedom, justice and

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peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; **freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; safeguarding the Holy Places of all religions; and being faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.**

This is why hundreds of thousands of us demonstrate every week, and this is why, thousands – including men and women from academia – now dedicate all their time to the struggle for our home, the struggle for the

foundations on which it was established 75 years ago because without them, we have no home, **and there is no other home for us.**

This home must accommodate all of us - secular, religious, and ultra-Orthodox; Jews and Arabs; Mizrahim and Ashkenazim; women and men. There is no way we will not accomplish our mission.

We will do it and we will succeed!



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SHA'AR
HaNEGEV

Dr. Nurit Zimmermann Sapir College



Good evening Sha'ar Hanegev!

My name is Nurit, I am a law lecturer here in Sapir Academic College and I am proud and excited to talk to you here today, near my academic home, as a representative of the Israeli Law Professors' Forum for Democracy and a member of the Academic Campaign Against the Regime Overhaul.

I am proud to speak on behalf of a large group of academics that have stepped out of the classrooms, libraries and labs to fight for Israeli democracy and clearly voice our protest against the regime overhaul.

Most importantly, I am proud to be part of this moving and historical protest of a huge part of the Israeli public. This public has been taking to the streets for 4 months now, in the face of a well-oiled machine of propaganda and fake news, constant attacks on the truth, lie-filled incitement against the Supreme Court, and an inadequate civics education. This public is Israel's last defender against a power-drunk coalition, with its attempts to change the rules of the game and to

convince us that democracy means that whoever won the elections has the right to do whatever they please. fessors' Forum for Democracy Israeli Law

I watched Prime Minister Netanyahu give an interview to a foreign TV channel, dismissively saying that most of the protestors against the legal "reform" don't even know what they are protesting against.

I am here to say that the Israeli public understands all too well what's at stake, we know what you are trying to do and we are rising up to fight to keep our freedom and rights in our democratic country.

The public understands so well, that after 3 months of protesting and after you have ruined the economy and Israel's foreign relations, your very own Minister of Justice admitted that there was an "error in the bill that he was advocating" and that it actually facilitates dictatorship.

In this long civics class that we are all taking right now, the Israeli public gets an "A", while you and your government get a "F".



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We, the citizens, understand perfectly well that democracy is rule by the people for the people, and not rule by the majority for certain interest groups, or for such or another leader.

This government has been advancing over 150 bills that are of no service for the people. They have nothing to do with the high cost of living, advancing the peripheral areas of the country, health or education. These bills have everything to do with advancing the narrow interests of politicians and deepening inequality and corruption.

We the citizens understand very well that democracy is the rule of law and equality before the law. We understand that your government is trying to place itself above the law and create a reality where there are no checks and balances, and no oversight on what it can do. It is doing so because the Supreme Court and the Legal Advisors stand in the government's way to fulfill its masterplan, be it the elimination of the judiciary, promoting annexation and apartheid, or the establishment of a Halachic state which discriminates against huge parts of the population.

We understand very well that democracy is dependent upon strong democratic institutions – an independent judiciary, free media and a vibrant academia. Democracy cannot be based on cynical politicians who post video clips online promising not to harm civil rights.

We know that democracy and equality are intertwined and that it's impossible to maintain a solid and genuine democracy without true equality – between the Secular and the Ultra-orthodox, between settlers and residents of the peripheral areas, between Jews and Arabs and between men and women. Democracy cannot exist without solidarity and without protecting the weakest members of society.

Democracy is also linked to truth: we understand that too and this is why we will use our mightiest power to fight the efficient lie-machine that you have constructed and the propaganda channels that constantly feed us lies and try to convince us that black is white and day is night. We will not tire of pointing out the lies and of explaining that the High Court of Justice is not in favor of rapists or terrorists as the Minister



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of Justice shamelessly claims.

The High Court of Justice is not a leftist junta that makes decisions upon a whim or personal interests and it certainly did not bring infiltrators into the country. The High Court of Justice is not standing in the government's way in fighting the high cost of living, advancing education, health or welfare, or fighting the ever-growing crime and 60 murders that occurred since the beginning of the year in the Arab society. The High Court of Justice is the excuse and scapegoat for lazy and failing ministers for their inability to implement policy or to rule.

The High Court of Justice is the protector of the weak, of minorities and of women. The High Court of Justice is responsible for shielding schools in Sderot against missile attacks, it increased the compensation for the Gaza-disengagement evacuees, it determined the minimum conditions for dignified living, and established LGBTQ rights.

It is true that the High Court of Justice, much like other Israeli institutions, should be more diverse. However, diversity has nothing to do with the changes that this government is advancing. This is a government which consists of almost no women, LGBTQ, Arabs, Druze, Ethiopians, Russians and people with disabilities. This government, which is seeking to expand the powers of the Rabbinical Courts, where there are no women at all, has no right to lecture us on diversity. It is not diversity that this government is promoting, but rather non-professional and non-independent judges who serve the government's own interests.

Finally, democracy goes hand in hand with education and enlightenment, and

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it needs them in order to allow critical discourse, social mobility and innovative ideas. Democracy cannot exist without a free academia, just as academia cannot exist without democracy. This government will not stop at destroying the courts. After it is done with the courts it will proceed to destroy academia, with bills as have already been proposed such as cancelling tenure.

We, members of the academia, will not yield to the populist and shallow discourse that incites against the elite and mocks thoroughness, knowledge, expertise and education. We will keep fighting for a free and vibrant academia, academic freedom of speech and freedom of thought and expression. We will fight for equal opportunity for every boy and girl in Israel to receive a good education, regardless of where they were born, because education is the key to reducing social gaps and promoting equality. This government that lectures for diversity in the Supreme Court has ironically voted against a law that prohibits discrimination in schools against female students of Ethiopian and Sephardi descent, and did not support the law that would allow single mothers to acquire an education without harming their income support benefits. One of the first decisions made by the Minister of Finance was to cancel a substantial benefit that was given to colleges located in the peripheral areas of Israel, such as Sapir Academic College, right here in Sha'ar Hanegev. This government fears education because **education is truth, and knowledge gives power to the citizens and not the government.**

This evening is crucial to this amazing protest – tomorrow, the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) reconvenes and we will be one vote away from the coalition's taking over the Committee for

Selecting Judges. The protest has been going on for a long time and naturally, exhaustion and burnout set in. The political situation has a negative effect on us all, and that is why it is important to proudly look back at our achievements so far and look forward with determination and optimism, **because Israel will not become a dictatorship, not on our watch!**



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Prof. Aaron Ciechanover The Technion – Israel Institute of Technology



Shalom friends, opponents of turning Israel into a religious messianic dictatorship!

For a moment, it seemed that with the sound of the siren, we also heard the Prime Minister calling: “We are all brothers”.

But at the protest in Jerusalem -

tens of thousands of people trampled on images of the Supreme Court justices and the Attorney General - and turned Jerusalem into Tehran!

Minister Levin, in his false defamatory words, called the judges:

“Supporters of rapists and terrorists”

We should never believe their cry: “We are brothers”!

The carpet bombing we are under is not a reform but a regime coup,

and it is a bald-faced lie to say that it is the will of the voter!

The “reform” did not appear in any election platform, nor in any coalition agreement, or in the Prime Minister’s speech at the swearing-in of his government when he presented its goals.

The “reform” was a cunningly-concealed intentional secret, that emerged much later like a bolt out of the blue.

The damage to the economy, the damage to the international relations, and the damage to Israel’s internal and external security – have already been done.

But soon the damage will be done to research, science and technology in Israel, which are the foundation of its economy and security!

Science is dependent on academic freedom, that cannot be separated from political or cultural freedom.

One cannot be faithful to truth in science, and a distorter of truth in daily life!

Countries without full freedom are not players in the field of science and technology - look at the mighty Russia in its war in Ukraine, surrendering without a battle to the Western technology.

Scientists will not be trained here, others will leave, and those who see Israel as their homeland and are abroad - **will not return!**

In Israel, science is not a matter of human curiosity alone, and it is not a privilege – it is the only guarantee of our security and economic existence!

Science will not co-exist with the Regime Coup!



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The discussion is much broader than the composition of the Committee for Selecting Judges.

It involves 150 laws, which cannot be the subject of detailed discussion and compromise.

For example, the No-Enlistment Law will eliminate the concept of the People's Army and of the shouldering of the burden.

The Deri Law 2 will qualify convicted criminals for ministerial positions.

The Economic Arrangements Law diverts research budgets to institutions that prepare hundreds of thousands of children to a life of poverty and degeneration;

and Minister Wasserlauf has the audacity to propose a governmental policy which relies on the Nation-State Law and turns Israel into an apartheid state!

This is an avalanche, a blizzard that cannot be open to discussion or compromise!

These laws have one purpose –

To destroy the Zionist narrative of a democratic state with Jewish historical values,

and to turn Israel into a theocracy!

As the President of Israel said before he started the compromise journey:

“This pile of laws should be thrown into the dustbin!”

History will remember these ongoing protests, and the determination and perseverance of the hundreds of thousands who got up day after day, evening after evening, against the ruin of democracy and the destruction of the Zionist dream.

You are the ones who will bring victory!

Critical days lie ahead – Do not Fear!

We will escalate the struggle as required and we will win this battle!



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Afterword

Nothing about any of this is over and done with. In regular times it would never have crossed our minds to issue a booklet so quickly. Every speech would have been carefully edited, and we would have spent hours on photograph selection and days discussing the connection between the booklet's structure and its message. However, these are not regular times. We hastened to deliver all these speeches to you without dotting our i's and crossing our t's. We wanted to relay the wonderful spirit of many organisers and speakers nationwide. Therefore, instead of a perfect design, you're getting precisely what happened on the evening of 29 April 2023. Some of the mistakes are the speakers', and some are ours. This is a protest, and this is the way.

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Amichay Vardi, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Adi Chen, The Technion

Karina Yaniv, The Weizmann Institute

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