



7th November 2023

To:

Prof. Nemat “Minouche” Shafik, President of Columbia University

RE: Letter by 166 Columbia University professors - Requesting the University's Reaction

Dear Prof. Shafik,

We, at '[BaShaar](#) – Academic Community for Israeli Society'¹, have read the [letter signed by 166 Columbia University professors](#) defending students who supported Hamas' “military action” on October 7th.

We are appalled by the reference of these Columbia professors to the Hamas brutal and inhuman attack on October 7th as "military action". The politically correct and washed words in their letter cover an intentional horrendous massacre aimed at innocent civilians. There is an abundance of verified evidence of the crimes against humanity performed by Hamas, which these professors deliberately ignored. Would any of them refer to the 9/11 terrorist terrible attack as a mere ‘military action’?

We expect better from academic researchers committed to facts and truth. No decent human being can refer to October 7th Hamas' atrocities as "military action", or avoid condemning them unequivocally. What we find contemptable is the failure to condemn, in clear and explicit terms, Hamas's horrible atrocities. Not a word of compassion was expressed toward the Israeli victims of the inhumane Hamas massacre and the abduction of innocent civilians including babies, children and the elderly to Gaza. The first decent thing they should have done is to categorically deplore Hamas massacre! You cannot just use clean and politically correct words addressing this inhumane attack. **Such brutal atrocities on innocent civilians should never be referred to as act of war or overlooked. Doing so is deplorable and MORALLY WRONG.**

What happened on October 7th is not just another clash in the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas. Hamas terrorists brutally slaughtered over 1400 civilians including the elderly, men, women, pregnant women, children and babies. Parents were tortured in front of their children, and babies and children were tortured and their bodies mutilated. They were shot, beheaded, burned alive, fetuses were brutally cut brutally of their pregnant mothers, women were raped and then murdered, families burned and corpses then triumphantly displayed to cheering ecstatic crowds – all in the inhuman ISIS tradition. Additionally, 240 Israelis, including men, women, children, babies and sick elderly were taken hostage, with Hamas cynically using them as human shields alongside Gaza civilians. **These acts of terror by Hamas represent PURE EVIL that a moral society cannot and should not ignore or justify under no circumstances.**

What Hamas has done is comparable to the atrocities committed by ISIS, not to mention the crimes against humanity perpetrated by the Nazis against the Jews during the Holocaust. These are not actions of war.

¹ BaShaar – Academic Community for Israeli Society is an Israeli registered non-profit and non-government organization, established in 1999 by academic leaders amongst them the Ex- Presidents of the Technion and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. BaShaar lists over 2,000 senior faculty members from all institutions of higher education in Israel, including former presidents and rectors, Nobel laureates, laureates of the Israel Prize and other prestige awards. BaShaar operates both as an Educational Framework and a as a platform for critical discussion and free debates on issues of higher education and Israeli society. <https://www.bashaar.org.il/about-bashaar/>



If you have read Hamas' Charter, you must be aware that Hamas is a fanatical and extremist terrorist organization. One can support Palestinian rights and, at the same time, vehemently condemn in clear terms the inhuman brutality of Hamas. These professors failed to do so.

Indeed, the innocent civilian population in Gaza suffers a lot and is caught in an ongoing war. Moreover, Hamas uses them as human shield and violently prevents them from reaching the safe zone. Further Hamas positions its military bases and missile launchers in civilian institutions such as hospital and amusement parks.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is highly complex, with various facets that unfortunately complicate its resolution and cause profound pain on both sides. Each side has its own narrative and claims.

One would expect academic researchers to acknowledge this complexity and refrain from taking a simplistic, distorted and biased view, as they state in this letter.

Over the years, there have been times where Arab states or the Palestinians rejected any compromise. Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2004, dismantling Jewish settlements. This ultimately led to Hamas assuming control, resulting in constant shelling and missile attacks on Israeli villages and towns, causing numerous rounds of military operations.

We deeply empathize with the suffering of innocent civilians and wholeheartedly support the ongoing efforts, with Israel's consent, to provide humanitarian aid and maintain a safe zone. We hope that the humanitarian aid reaches only innocent civilians and not Hamas. In this context, it is worth noting that Hamas has seized all fuel supplies from UNRA intended for hospitals in Gaza.

We share the hope for a just and peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There is no alternative but a political solution in which both sides understand and accept the necessity of a compromise.

Unfortunately, Hamas does not share this view, as is explicitly stated in its charter's opening quotes: "Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it"².

We all cherish, respect and guard freedom of speech and academic freedom, however, we find that the professors letter crossed a line. **We would like to know what is Columbia University's stand vis-à-vis their letter and if you intend to respond to it.**

Thank you for your attention

Hoping for Better days,

Prof. Shimon Yankielowicz
Chairperson of the Forum
for Higher Education, BaShaar

Dr. Vered Ariel Nahari
CEO, BaShaar

² Source: Yale University Law school, Avalon Project – Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy "[Hamas Covenant 1988 - The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement](#)"