



15th November 2023

To: The European International Studies Association

Prof. **Beste İşleyen**, EISA President

RE: The “EISA Governing Board statement on attacks on higher education and academic freedom in Palestine”

Dear Prof. Beste İşleyen

We, members of '[BaShaar](https://www.bashaar.org.il) – Academic Community for Israeli Society'¹, read the [statement](#) of the board of the European International Studies Association concerning "an attack on higher education and academic freedom in Palestine" which we, regrettably, find totally biased and distorted.

We would expect better from an organisation committed to academic values which require us to seek the truth, be rational and base our findings on facts alone. One cannot address a very complicated issues in a superficial and simplistic way.

One of BaShaar's goals is protecting and safeguarding academic values and academic ethos, notably academic freedom, against any threat by any Israeli authority. This applies for Israeli institutions as well as Palestinian institutions.

The EISA, as an organization devoted to education, chose to be one-sided, address and deplore only the damage inflicted by the Israeli army response-operation on the higher education system in Gaza. **You chose not to** refer to the starting point of this war i.e. Hamas' inhuman atrocities in Israel. Moreover, **you did not** deem it necessary to mention and to explicitly condemn Hamas' heinous atrocities, or to show any compassion to the innocent victims in Isarel.

In its reaction to Hamas' attack, Israel makes a great effort not to harm innocent civilians or any civilian institutions such as schools, hospitals, universities etc. There is absolutely no planned attack on knowledge as you claim.

On the other hand, Hamas is using such civilian institutions as bases for its terror operations and as storage places for arms. Hamas is also using innocent civilians as human shields.

There is by now an ample of evidence of how Hamas is using schools, hospitals, children's playgrounds and universities as terror bases on ground and underground, including operational headquarters, arm factories and arm storerooms.

During Hamas terrorists brutal attack on Israel on October 7th, Hamas destroyed and burned to the ground kindergartens and schools. Sapir academic college was shelled and suffered major destruction. For over a month missiles attacks on Israeli towns are targeted to hit civilians. Some of the missiles exploded in kindergartens and schools. The fact the damage in Israel is not greater is not because Hamas tries to avoid harming innocent civilians but rather because of the Israeli defence system. **If you care so much for education, why are you silent about Hamas' attack on knowledge in Israel? Your silence sounds like justification.**

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/>



In your statement you chose to refer to a very narrow perspective of what really happened – you confined just to what you refer to as an Israeli attack on higher education and academic freedom in Palestine, and in particular in Gaza. **It is hard to imagine what moral principle led you to completely ignore the terrible atrocities committed by Hamas.**

On October 7th, Hamas terrorists butchered and slaughtered more than 1400 Israelis, most of them civilians: old people, men, women, pregnant women, elderly, children and babies. Parents were tortured in front of their children, babies and children were tortured and their bodies mutilated. They were shot, beheaded, burned alive, fetuses cut out brutally of their pregnant mothers, women raped and then murdered, families burned and corpses then triumphantly displayed to cheering ecstatic Gazan crowds – all in the inhuman ISIS tradition. About 240 were taken hostage, amongst them elderly sick people, men, women, pregnant women, children and babies and Hamas is cynically using them together with Gazan civilians as human shields. **This is PURE EVIL that any human being should not turn his back to like you, regrettably, did. We find it morally wrong**

War is a terrible thing and we grieve the loss of life of innocent people, both Israelis and Palestinians, men women and children. Humanitarian support should be and is provided, and the Israeli army secures and protects civilian Gazans from Hamas violence on their way to the safe zone.

We support a peaceful and just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, one can support Palestinian rights and at the same time firmly denounce in a clear voice the inhuman brutality of Hamas.

Terror and violence go against the core of academic values. Hamas is a cruel, fanatic Islamic terror organisation – that inflicts terrible suffering on innocent civilians in Gaza and Israel and calls for the destruction of the State of Israel – as is explicitly stated in its [charter](#).

For the sake of fairness, we ask you to distribute and share our response letter to all those you sent your statement.

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

Copy: EISA Governing Board Members: Prof. Sonia Lucarelli, Prof. Corina Lacatus, Prof. Debbie Lisle, Prof. Thierry Balzacq, Prof. Daniela Lai, Prof. Magdalena Kozub-Karkut, Prof. Beatrix Futák-Campbell, Prof. Polly Pallister-Wilkins, Prof. Nora El Qadim, Prof. Joana Ricarte, Prof. Rebecca Pedi