



16th November 2023

To: Utrecht University

Prof. **Anton Pijpers** – President of the Utrecht University Executive Board

RE: Utrecht University's "Message in Response to the Situation in Israel and the Gaza Strip"

Dear Prof. Anton Pijpers,

We, at '[BaShaar](https://www.bashaar.org.il) – Academic Community for Israeli Society'*, read your "[Message](#) in response to the situation in Israel and the Gaza Strip". We were appalled to find that you did not deem it necessary to mention Hamas by name nor clearly condemn the heinous atrocities committed by Hamas in Israel. You referred to a general sentiment: "The university sympathizes with all those affected".

We appreciate your intention in writing this message, however, there is a major issue **we cannot accept: the symmetry you suggest between the two sides.**

What has happened on October 7th is not another clash between Israel and Hamas. 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 crowds – all in the inhuman ISIS tradition. More than 240 were taken hostage, amongst them elderly sick people, men, women (incl. pregnant), children and babies and Hamas is cynically using them together with Gazan civilians as human shields. **This is PURE EVIL, and one cannot and should not stay within the realm of "politically correctness" vis-a-vis these atrocities.**

What Hamas has done is similar to the atrocities committed by the Nazis against the Jews during the Holocaust or the atrocities of ISIS. Therefore, we find the absence of any clear condemnation, as well as the symmetry you present between both sides, **morally wrong.**

There is a profound and moral difference between Israel's efforts to avoid harming civilians, and Hamas's deliberate strategy of targeting and inflicting terrible suffering upon as many civilians as possible in Israel as well as in Gaza. We deeply regret the loss of innocent civilian lives in Gaza. We support a peaceful and just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. **One can support Palestinian rights and at the same time firmly denounce in a clear voice the inhuman brutality of Hamas.**

We urge you to re-think, rectify, take a morally clear stand and explicitly condemn Hamas' inhumane crimes.

Hoping for Better days,

Prof. Hagit Messer-Yaron
Chairperson BaShaar

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

Dr. Vered Ariel Nahari
CEO, BaShaar

Copy: Utrecht University's Executive Board members: Professor Henk Kummeling - Rector Magnificus, Drs. Margot van der Starre - Vice President, Ms. Chiara Stam, student assessor

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/>