

October 30, 2023

**To:** Heads of the Academic and Scientific Community, worldwide

**From:** Prof. David Harel, President, Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities

Prof. Yoseph A. Mekori, Chair, Planning and Budgeting Committee of Israel's  
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## **Israel's Gravest Crisis**

### **A Call to the Academic and Scientific Community**

We are the heads of three of the main bodies responsible for the promotion of scientific research and higher education in Israel, and are active scientists ourselves.

The October 7 massacre by Hamas, unparalleled in its ferocity, and echoing the heinous actions of organizations such as ISIS, is arguably the most devastating event that the Jewish people have had to endure since the Holocaust. To date, we mourn the loss of over 1,400 people killed in the carnage, including entire families, and close to 240 people violently abducted and taken captive by Hamas. The victims of this terrible day, which also left several thousand wounded, include babies, children, women, sick and elderly people.

Alarmingly, worldwide protests in support of Hamas have been proliferating lately, often taking place on academic campuses, and sometimes coupled with demands for Israel's annihilation. Time does not stand still, and the situation right now has the frightening potential of becoming a fully-fledged war of Israel against Hamas, which could very well escalate into a horrendous regional war.

We must state upfront, very clearly:

**Israel shall fight with unwavering determination to secure its right to exist in peace and security, to pursue knowledge, creativity and wisdom freely and fearlessly, and to continue advancing its research, technology and education in full force.**

It is obvious, however, that this should be done while making every possible effort to avoid hurting innocent civilians, something that we are demanding very clearly of our own government. This is far from being an easy task, given the kind of response the October 7 attack invites, coupled with Hamas' tradition of using Gaza's civilian population as human shields.

In any case, we must equally clearly say that since science has no borders, scientists and academics must rise above mere rhetoric. The very nature of our profession calls for us to pursue truth and veracity, guided by shared values and morality. Hence:

**We call upon you, heads of scientific and academic institutions worldwide, to publicly and unequivocally denounce the October 7 massacre, and to demand the immediate release of all the hostages. We also urge you to take every possible measure to prevent dangerous incitement from within your respective institutions, and to safeguard the well-being of Israeli and Jewish students and faculty, who may be at risk of retaliatory actions.**

We should remark that the situation is clearly affecting our science and academia. Several dozen Israeli students and researchers are among those killed or abducted, and numerous others have been called up for lengthy military reserve service. Moreover, even among those who are not directly affected, the quest for scientific knowledge is being replaced by immediate survival concerns. The long-term impact of these facts might resonate far more broadly than in Israel alone, with consequences felt throughout the international scientific and academic community.

Israeli academia is beginning to exhibit troubling signs of unrest among students too, with a volatile potential for severe escalation. Hence:

**The delicate fabric of co-existence and mutual trust between Jewish and non-Jewish citizens is a crucial component of Israel's future. If a serious effort is not made right now, pro-actively supported by the heads of our universities and colleges, to take carefully wrought steps to help lower the flames, there is a real danger of the situation flaring up, and disastrous violence erupting.**

Let us not be mere bystanders. Let us be advocates for justice, equality and peace, and let us actively champion a profound respect for the dignity of human life – *all* human life.

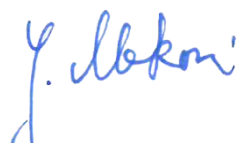
We deeply believe that these goals can be achieved, and have an unwavering conviction that this is true also for an eventual lasting peace in our troubled region.

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