

Application of Ghent University's human rights policy to cooperation with Israeli partners (internal group mail of 6 May 2024)

Dear colleagues and students

The dramatic situation in Gaza leaves no one unmoved. Regrettably the conflict between Israel and Palestine is not new, but since the escalation of violence in October last year, the human and material toll has been extremely high. The Israeli response to the terror of Hamas has been disproportionate and is accompanied by systematic and widespread human rights violations.

Ghent University does not want its international activities to involve human rights violations, its research results to be misused later for human rights violations, or cooperation with partners involved in human rights violations. Therefore, since 2018 Ghent University has [a human rights policy](#).

Ghent University's human rights policy focuses on assessing partners or potential partners in existing or potential collaborations, and not on assessing countries, governments or their policies. This involves checking whether those partners are involved in human rights violations and whether they themselves bear responsibility for this. Partners are not held responsible by Ghent University's human rights policy for government human rights violations in which they are not involved, or for merely complying with problematic legislation. However, Ghent University does not wish to cooperate with partners who actively contribute to human rights violations committed by a national government.

This policy framework also applies to cooperation with Israeli partners. When cooperation with an Israeli partner is envisaged, our Committee on Human Rights Policy and Dual Use Research (CHRPDUR) formulates an advice on the matter. These recommendations are always the result of careful analysis and meticulous research. In case of doubt, partners are contacted to discuss the concerns, which allows the CHRPDUR to formulate recommendations based on the broadest and most complete view of relevant aspects.

In recent years, this procedure has led to both positive and negative opinions from the CHRPDUR regarding (possible) cooperation with Israeli partners.

Precisely because of this careful application of human rights policy, Ghent University currently has no cooperation with any parties involved in serious human rights violations. Not in Gaza, not in East Jerusalem, nor in the West Bank. More precisely, this means that Ghent University has no collaborations with Israeli defense companies, Israeli security services, companies making a profit from activities in the Israeli-occupied Territories, universities located (even if only partially) in the Israeli-occupied Territories, research groups collaborating with the Israeli military, research groups conducting archaeological research in the Israeli-occupied Territories, and so on.

Claims implying that Ghent University is involved in human rights violations are unfounded. The fact that Ghent University is not involved in human rights violations – partly as a result

of complying with our human rights policy and therefore also partly due to the correct application of that policy by the CHRPDUR – illustrates that this human rights policy is effective.

Since the escalation of violence, Ghent University's community was informed about the application of our human rights policy to (possible) cooperation with Israeli partners already [in November 2023](#) and [in December 2023](#).

At its meeting on 3 May 2024 the Board of Governors confirmed Ghent University's human rights policy. The Board of Governors also decided that the policy to do a partner-by-partner assessment when cooperation is sought will continue to apply to Israel as well.

In light of the societal demand for clarity on cooperation between universities and Israeli partners, the Board of Governors also decided to communicate transparently on all positive and negative decisions regarding (possible) cooperation with Israeli partners and this since the introduction of Ghent University's human rights policy in 2018. You will find the overview of these positive and negative decisions below this message.

Ghent University continues to urge our governments to stop all violence and to support initiatives that can help bring peace to the region. As a university, we have a great deal of expertise that can be used for reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation. We are ready to put that expertise to use.

Best regards

Rik Van de Walle
Rector

Positive and negative decisions regarding cooperation with Israeli partners (since the introduction of the Ghent University human rights policy in 2018)

Negative decision

The negative decisions below result from the partner being located (even if only partially) in Israeli-occupied Territories, providing material support to the Israel Defense Forces, conducting activities in and/or benefiting from Israeli-occupied Territories, or being part of the Israeli government.

Ariel University
Hebrew University
Israel Police
Jewish National Fund (Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael)

The negative decisions below are recent, and the result of new evolutions since October 7, 2023. This means that while collaborations with these partners were positively assessed in the past and are currently ongoing, new collaborations are no longer possible. These institutions are ones found to be producing material for the military since October 2023, as well as institutions that are part of government ministries.

Holon Institute of Technology
MIGAL Galilee Research Institute
Volcani Centre (Agricultural Research Organisation of Israel)

Positive decision

3PLW
Aleph Farms
Argentum Consultants
Carmel Medical Center
Hadassah Academic College
Israel Oceanographic and Limnological Research
LibereU
Materials Zone
MellanoX
Melodea
MOFET
Paulee Cleantech
Qlight Nanotech
Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center

Positive decision, depending on the research group with which collaboration is sought

Certain research groups at these institutions are indirectly involved in human rights violations, for example, because these research groups develop defense or security technology for Israeli security forces (who use this technology to violate human rights), or because they conduct archaeological research in Israeli-occupied Territories. It is not possible to collaborate with these specific research groups but cooperation with other groups is allowed.

Bar-Ilan University
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
Technion
Tel Aviv University
University of Haifa
Weizmann Institute of Science