

# PRESS KIT

## Lawsuit Against Franco-Israeli Academic Partnerships

March 25, 2026

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# Press release

*March 24, 2026*

**Two French ministries and eight French universities sued for their ties to Israeli academic institutions complicit in violations of international law.**

On Tuesday, March 24, 2026, the Conseil d'État and administrative courts have been seized by several Palestinian, Jewish, professional and student organizations (CGT ferc Sup, Union Juive Française pour la Paix, Nidal, Sud éducation Paris, l'Union étudiante, Solidaires étudiant.e.s...) **to request the disclosure of partnership contracts binding numerous French universities to Israeli academic institutions, their suspension pending review, and their termination. An unprecedented initiative** calling into question the Ministry of Higher Education and Research (MESR), the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE), Sciences Po Paris, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University, Sorbonne University, Paris Sciences & Lettres (PSL) University, Aix-Marseille University, the University of Strasbourg, ENS Lyon, and the University of Grenoble.

The applicants call for the disclosure, review, and termination of ties between French and Israeli universities, **given their active participation in blatant and repeated international law violations committed by the State of Israel** (development of weapons, training of soldiers, development of military doctrines, war propaganda, involvement in the illegal colonization of Palestinian territories, repression of critical voices...).

Against a backdrop of escalating violence on a global scale, universities **have a duty of ethical integrity and must advocate for a strict respect of international law.** As such, they must take all necessary precautions to ensure their own compliance with these obligations.

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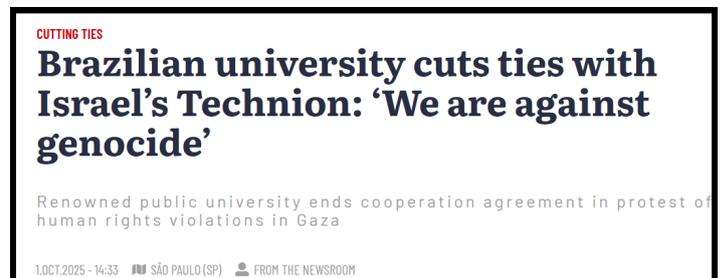
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# What are French universities being accused of ?

For more than two years, students, professors, and researchers have been mobilizing to denounce the genocide, apartheid policies, and colonization carried out by the Israeli state in Gaza and the West Bank. As members of the academic community, they are calling for clear support for Palestinian students and researchers, **victims of educide**, and are urging the **termination of any ties that could directly or indirectly support their persecution**.

Hence, academic partnerships between French and Israeli universities have been denounced. Indeed, Israeli universities have historically developed as outposts of Palestinian colonization and continue to be **essential mechanisms** in land seizure, soldier and intelligence unit training, weapons production, military and legal doctrinal development, and the creation of pro-genocide propaganda narratives... **Far from acting as a check on power, they institutionally participate in the violence of the Israeli military-industrial complex** (see page 8).

For this reason, Palestinian and critical Israeli academics are calling for a boycott of these institutions. **This call is being heeded by a growing number of universities around the world** (see page 10).



These calls to cut ties were rejected by French university presidents. Yet in 2022, all of them had joined the **academic boycott of Russia** without causing any particular outcry. **We condemn this double standard**.

The partnerships maintained by several French universities with complicit Israeli universities provide them with reputational, symbolic, and diplomatic capital, as well as material and human resources, and normalize the occupation. These partnerships therefore contradict international law, as well as the universities' obligations to ensure respect for human rights, and must therefore be terminated.

# **Unconditional compliance with government directives that undermines academic freedom and the autonomy of universities in France.**

Many university administrations have justified maintaining these partnerships based on **government directives**. In particular, they refer to an opinion issued by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research's Ethics Committee in June 2024 at the request of the minister at the time. The opinion **encourages the repression** of events related to the situation in Palestine within universities. In this opinion, the ministry's committee states that institutions must **"comply with government directives,"** arguing that respect for **"neutrality"** and **"loyalty in contractual relations"** takes precedence over **"political positions."** It would therefore also **take precedence over the recommendations of the International Court of Justice**, a legal nonsense. This opinion does not refer to any rule of international law and **in no way constitutes a legal obligation** (it is neither a circular nor a statutory text). **School administrators retain full authority to decide whether to suspend their institution's partnership agreements.**

However, many university presidents have been pressured, through repeated communications from the ministry, to oppose the termination of partnerships with Israeli universities, **against the advice of their own academic community** (refusal to put the matter to a vote or unilateral cancellation of motions submitted to the Board of Governors to end the partnerships, as at Sciences Po Strasbourg; failure to take into account reports on the risks of maintaining the partnerships and motions passed within several departments; and disregard for student and faculty mobilizations in favor of ending the partnerships...).

## **Censorship by the Paris-Saclay University Ethics Committee**

A telling example of the code of silence imposed on universities regarding partnerships; in February 2026, the Paris-Saclay Ethics Committee, Poléthis, issued an opinion stating that "there is an identified risk of non-compliance between the practices and behaviors of Israeli universities and academic ethical principles" and recommended suspending partnerships between Paris-Saclay and several Israeli universities under review. Initially published on the university's website, on Poléthis's official page, the opinion was removed less than two weeks later. The university administration refuses to republish it.



We believe that there is a shared responsibility between government departments and universities regarding the maintenance of ties with institutions involved in serious human rights violations. **Given that maintaining these partnerships violates the principle of neutrality of public institutions and that government directives undermine academic freedom, we are compelled to pursue legal action.**

## Stages of the lawsuit



- **December 2025:** Formal notices sent to eight universities and two ministries
- **March 25, 2026:** Cases filed with the administrative courts and the Council of State to challenge the decisions rejecting the formal notices
- **April 2026:** Amicus curiae briefs filed by NGOs and associations supporting this legal action

## Who are the applicants?

In total, 21 organizations (national unions and local associations) are filing these lawsuits, along with several faculty members working at the universities in question. Among them are:

- **Jewish and Palestinian human rights organizations:** the French Jewish Union for Peace (UJFP), the Nidal Association...
- **Higher education unions:** CGT Ferc Sup, Sud Education Paris, Sud Education Bouches-du-Rhône...
- **Student unions:** the Student Union, Solidaires Etudiant.e.s, Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) Sciences Po...



# Legal basis of the lawsuit

## Decisions by international courts regarding Israel

In its **orders of January 26, 2024, and May 24, 2024, in the case of South Africa v. Israel, the International Court of Justice (ICJ)** found that there is a plausible risk of genocide in Gaza and ordered Israel to: *“Take all measures within its power to prevent the commission of any act falling within the scope of Article II of the Genocide Convention.”* The ceasefire signed in October 2025 is not being respected by the Israeli military, which continues what the UN Human Rights Council’s Commission of Inquiry described as “genocide” in September 2025.

**On July 19, 2024, the ICJ ruled that Israel’s continued presence in the occupied Palestinian territories is unlawful.** It emphasized that the occupation, which was initially temporary, has become a de facto annexation, thereby violating fundamental principles of international law. This occupation has been accompanied by serious human rights violations. The colonisation of the West Bank has accelerated further since early 2026. France, along with 20 other countries, condemned this de facto annexation, without imposing concrete sanctions against the State of Israel.

## From the established risk of genocide and the illegal occupation in Palestine to the positive obligations that every State must fulfill, or risk being held accountable

The aforementioned orders and opinions of the International Court of Justice are supplemented by a body of case law and clear international norms that require:

- First and foremost, the obligation to prevent genocide is a peremptory, autonomous obligation with *erga omnes* effect and practical implications: it requires States not only to refrain from complicity, but above all to take active measures in the face of any risk of genocide. **This must lead States, their administrations, and private companies to implement a number of concrete measures to ensure they act in the face of this risk** (sanctions, severing economic ties, diplomatic pressure, etc.)
- Second, with regard to colonization, there is an obligation established by the ICJ requiring them not to recognize as lawful the situation resulting from this occupation, not to provide aid or assistance for its maintenance, and to cooperate to bring it to an end. These obligations, which are of an *erga omnes* nature, were reaffirmed and extended in 2025 by various international bodies, thereby reinforcing the requirement on States to cease all

forms of support—particularly economic or military—that could contribute to the continuation of unlawful situations. **In this context, maintaining economic, industrial, or military relations with actors involved in colonization may constitute a violation of international law**, even in the absence of any direct intention to participate in the commission of international crimes.

## **Applications filed with the courts and the Conseil d'État**

Accordingly, through these legal actions, we ask the courts, the Conseil d'État, and the CADA :

- To order universities and ministries **to disclose the partnership agreements**
- To note that these partnerships **violate France's obligations under international law** and to request that universities and government ministries suspend them as a **precautionary measure**.

# The complicity of Israeli universities in crimes committed by the Israeli state

Israeli universities do not serve as a countervailing force advocating for the Israeli state's respect for human rights. On **the contrary, they have actively supported its colonial and genocidal policies since the creation of the State of Israel:** universities have been at the heart of Israel's project of colonization and oppression against the Palestinians. This complicity takes various forms, all of which are well documented:



The website of Bar-Ilan University, which publishes reports denying the crimes committed by the Israeli military.

- The construction and maintenance of **campuses in illegally occupied territories**, as well as the **instrumentalization of archaeological excavations** to justify the annexation of Palestinian land.
- The **development of the Israeli military's arsenal** through research and development programs, partnerships, and investments in Israeli arms companies.
- **Numerous partnerships with the Israeli Armed Forces** (training programs for the armed forces and joint research centers, research partnerships, direct support for the war effort, recruitment programs, etc.)

## 'It'll turn campus into an army base': Tel Aviv University to host soldiers' program

A collaboration between the Israeli army and TAU has drawn backlash from faculty and Palestinian students decrying the militarization of academia.



By Meron Rapoport | October 4, 2023

- The development of the Israeli military's doctrines, as well as the development of **legal, political, and philosophical doctrines** justifying campaigns of genocide.
- **Active participation in Israeli war propaganda** and the absence of official condemnation by these universities of genocide, colonization, or apartheid—crimes that have been extensively documented and denounced by international institutions.

“ *Universities – centres of intellectual growth and power – have sustained the political ideology underpinning the colonization of Palestinian land, developed weaponry and overlooked or even endorsed systemic violence, while global research collaborations have obscured Palestinian erasure behind a veil of academic neutrality.*

— Report A/HRC/59/23 - Human Rights Council of UN - July 2025



## A few examples

The Technion Institute **works for Israel's three leading weapons manufacturers:** Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), Elbit Systems, and Rafael Advanced Defense Systems. The institute offers programs designed to integrate students into the industry throughout their training, with professors serving as “ghost employees” at these companies. Among other things, the Technion participated in the development of the **D9 armored bulldozer, used to raze Palestinian homes in the occupied territories.**



*Moti Sender, Gush Katif, July 24, 2017, Gaza Strip, CC*

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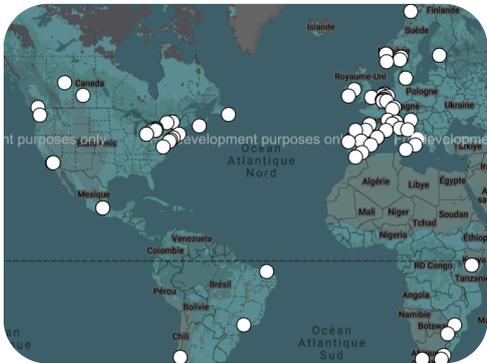
In 2019, Tel Aviv University established a **joint research center with the Air Force.** “The academic research conducted there will help advance [...] **combat theories, as well as the process of building up the armed forces.**”

### **For a genuine dialogue with Israeli academics**

The call for an academic boycott was issued by Palestinians themselves, through the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI). It is supported by Israeli academics who oppose the regime's abuses. They emphasize that the **boycott rejects all forms of discrimination based on individual identity, whether citizenship, race, gender, religion, or personal opinions.** In accordance with the call from our Palestinian colleagues (PACBI), the termination of partnerships does not prohibit academic exchanges; it does not target individual Israeli professors, researchers, or students. **On the contrary, constructive collaboration and dialogue with them are encouraged—a dialogue that is possible only outside the control of compromised institutions.** In the event of the termination or suspension of partnerships, Israeli students and faculty may continue to come to study and work in France by following the same procedure as all foreign students whose home university does not have a partnership with the French university of destination.



# An international wave of academic boycott



<https://academicsforpalestine.dk/academic-boycott/boycott-map/>

A growing number of universities across all continents are **suspending, terminating, and/or committing not to renew their partnerships with Israeli universities**, particularly since 2024. Among them are all 76 Spanish universities, six Italian universities, three Brazilian universities, five Norwegian universities, two Swiss universities, seven Dutch universities... Many of these terminations follow the work of expert groups, researchers, and legal scholars who were called upon to weigh in on the issue.

**In Norway**, five universities have jointly terminated their partnerships with Israeli universities, stating that: ***"The Israeli authorities have chosen to ignore the rulings of the International Court of Justice and have done nothing to improve the humanitarian situation. That is why we no longer wish to have cooperation agreements with Israeli universities."***

**In 2024, the Université Libre de Bruxelles** terminated its agreements with Tel Aviv University and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem due to *"the direct or indirect contribution of these universities to the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories as well as to other violations of international law. **The due diligence that these universities should have exercised is all the more important in the current context.**"* It chooses not to renew its partnership with the Weizmann Institute for the same reasons, and adds: *"More specifically, **the significant ties to arms companies demonstrate that, far from taking all measures within its power to avoid perpetuating or facilitating the occupation and violations of international law in Gaza, the Weizmann Institute contributes to them and is responsible for a clear failure to exercise due diligence.**"*

**In June 2025, following in the footsteps of the University of Geneva, the University of Lausanne (UNIL)** ended its collaboration with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJI). UNIL experts note: *"that HUJI maintains a relationship of practical and ideological support for the military actions currently being pursued by the Israeli government despite international court rulings, notably the provisional measures ordered by the ICJ."*

**In Ireland, Trinity College Dublin** is taking things a step further: in June 2025, the university announced that it would **sever its institutional ties with the State of Israel, Israeli universities, and companies headquartered in Israel.**

# Additional resources

Maya Wind, *Towers of Ivory and Steel: How Israeli Universities Deny Palestinian Freedom*. London, Verso Books, 2024.

**PACBI's website:**  Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel

**AURDIP's website** (Association des Universitaires pour le Respect du Droit International en Palestine) : <https://aurdip.org>

**Stop Academic Complicity's Report** : "[Partenariats universitaires avec Israël et violations potentielles du droit](#)" (décembre 2025), downloadable at [academiccomplicity.fr](http://academiccomplicity.fr)

**From Economy of Occupation to Economy of Genocide** – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Occupied since 1967. OHCHR.

 A/HRC/59/23: From economy of occupation to economy of genocide - Report of the Special ...

## Experts reports on academic partnerships with Israel:

Commission d'éthique de la Recherche de l'université de Lausanne, mai 2025 :

[Préavis éthique de la CER-UNIL](#)



Legal brief of the researchers of the Law and Development Group of Antwerp University, june 2025 : [Breaches of obligations arising from peremptory norms of international law](#)

Avis de Poléthis - Conseil d'éthique de l'Université Paris Saclay, 11 décembre 2025 :

<https://aurdip.org/avis-de-polethis-sur-les-partenariats-de-recherche-entre-luniversite-paris-saclay-et-les-universites-israeliennes/>

UNION JUIVE FRANCAISE POUR LA PAIX

الاتحاد اليهودي الفرنسي من أجل السلام  
ההתאחדות היהודית הצרפתית למען השלום

**NIDAL**  
نضال

la  
**cgj**  
**FERC**  
SUP

**Union  
étudiante**  
S'organiser | Lutter | S'émanciper

éducation  
**Sud**  
BOUCHES-DU-RHÔNE

éducation  
**Sud**  
Paris  
**Solidaires**  
Union syndicale

**Solidaires**  
étudiant-e-s  
syndicats de luttes

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