



ACADEMIA UNDER COMMAND: MILITARISM IN ISRAELI ACADEMIA

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ACADEMIA UNDER COMMAND: MILITARISM IN ISRAELI ACADEMIA

Collaborations Between Institutions of
Higher Education in Israel and the Military,
Security Establishment and Military Industry

Nissi Peli

**A Report by New Profile -
The Movement to Demilitarize Israeli Society**

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New Profile's Report on Militarism in Israeli Academia

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Author: Nissi Peli

Graphic Design and Layout: Amit Ben-Haim

Cover: Soldiers in Tel Aviv University, 2023. Photograph by Nissi Peli

Translation: Itamar Shachar; Orian Zakai; Yariv Vershinsky; Mia Joskowicz

Contact: academy@newprofile.org | <https://newprofile.org/en/>

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ABSTRACT

Militarization is an ongoing process in which civil society adopts military models, structures, and values.

With the establishment of the State of Israel, the Ministry of Defense and the military marked the civilian education system as a strategic area for direct influence over the country's citizens, from kindergartens and schools to institutions of higher education. The militarization of kindergartens, elementary schools, and high schools was fast, due to their subordination to the state, but efforts to influence the academic arena met with only partial success.

Over the years, with the spread of military values and principles in Israeli civil society, academic institutions became increasingly willing to collaborate with the military. The military's efforts were joined by the state's other internal and external intelligence security services and military industry companies, who also identified the advantages of collaborating with academia. Academia, for its part, identified the economic advantages of joining forces with state-military organizations with large budgets and with the rapidly growing military industry, along with the deepening of militarism in Israel, the lack of effective oversight mechanisms, and the growing legitimacy in civil society for collaborations of this kind. That said, the primary motivation was, and likely still is, ideological.

These efforts were intended to harness the academic apparatus, its people, and its resources for various military needs, including through collaboration in the military training of soldiers and officers, military-academic research collaborations for the development of weapons and military technologies, and collaboration in the recruitment of students for these agencies and companies.

This report seeks to map and present the various collaborations of academic institutions in Israel with the military, state security and intelligence agencies, and military industry companies. Its goal is to examine how these collaborations make Israeli academia an active partner in a system of institutional and military violence in Israel and around the world, and the ways they affect students and academics, particularly those from vulnerable groups. The report reviews these and other aspects of military-academic collaborations. Its findings are based on research from open sources, responses to requests for information under the Freedom of Information Law, interviews with students and academics, and questionnaires distributed to these groups.

The data and testimonies collected paint the following picture: a broad collaboration exists between academic institutions in Israel and the military in a variety of fields, and there is a serious lack of both research and oversight mechanisms for these collaborations. As detailed below, this collaboration is expressed in a variety of ways and in effect subordinates the academic space and discourse to the military's needs and values, while harming research and academic freedom as well as the rights of students, prospective students, and academics.

Key Findings

- **Military-Academic collaboration in study programs:** At least 57 military-academic programs for active-duty soldiers and security service candidates exist in at least 27 academic institutions, including all major public universities. Academic institutions take an active part in recruiting youth for these programs and silence internal and external criticism of the collaboration with the Ministry of Defense and the military. In 2019-2022, the scope of financial collaboration between the Ministry of Defense and academic institutions in facilitating military-academic training for soldiers, career personnel, and reservists amounted to a total of ILS 269,275,031.33, a sum that reflects extensive collaboration and a clear economic motive.^{1, 2}
- **Militarization of academic space:** Academic institutions in Israel permit, with almost no restrictions, the entry of armed civilians into their grounds. Even when institutions set some restrictions, they are not enforced. No restrictions at all are imposed on armed soldiers in this context. Consequently, the presence of military uniforms and civilian and military weapons is common within academic institutions. These increase the feeling of insecurity for many students and academics, and lead to a distinction between people on campus – those who carry weapons and those who do not. The military and military-industrial companies sometimes make military use of the academic space, including by placing technological facilities and manned and unmanned observation posts, and by converting on-campus student housing into de facto military bases for participants in military-academic programs.

¹ This amount reflects the value of agreements signed between the Ministry of Defense and academic institutions regarding academic studies during the years 2019–2022. However, the duration of some of these agreements extends beyond those years (there are several agreements whose validity ends in 2023, 2024, and 2025).

² *Translator's Note:* All monetary figures in this report are presented in New Israeli Shekels (ILS), the currency used in the collaborations listed herein.

- **Recruitment of students on academic campuses:** State security and intelligence agencies, as well as military industry companies (private and public), engage in recruiting students into their ranks at career events on academic campuses, in academic courses, and at dedicated events, with the full cooperation of the academic institutions, which often actively assist in recruitment by publishing the events on their websites and social media pages.
- **Discrimination in admission to studies and student housing eligibility:** Various academic institutions require that candidates provide information about their military service or reasons for exemption from service. Also, in several academic institutions, bonus points are awarded in the admission process for on-campus student housing to those who have served in the military and to those on active reserve duty. In addition, in various military-academic programs, soldier-students are given automatic eligibility for student housing. This discrimination leads to a significant decrease in the chances of admission for students who need student housing due to low socioeconomic status and distance from the institution, and who were not drafted or did not complete full military service (which is the case for most Palestinian citizens of Israel).
- **Military-academic research:** Many academic institutions collaborate directly in research, commissioned or joint, with the Ministry of Defense, state security and intelligence agencies, and private and public companies in the military industry. These institutions and companies include, among others, the Directorate of Defense Research & Development in the Ministry of Defense (hereunder DDR&D)³, the Israeli Security Agency (also known as Shin Bet or Shabak; hereunder ISA)⁴, Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd. (hereunder Rafael),⁵ and Elbit Systems Ltd. (hereunder Elbit).⁶ In a number of cases, military industry companies have

³ *Translator's Note:* The DDR&D (Directorate of Defense, Research & Development) in the Israeli Ministry of Defense [defines](#) its mission as follows: "To ensure the preservation of the technological superiority and qualitative military edge of the State of Israel. The organization leads the development and direction of weapons and technological infrastructure—from basic research to full-scale development—alongside elite academic officer programs within the defense forces, the coordination of international agreements, and the implementation of security innovations across the defense branches. [...] The DDR&D coordinates cooperation among Israel's security entities, including the IDF, the Ministry of Defense, the various defense industries (Rafael, IAI, Elbit Systems, etc.), and academic institutions, and works to promote startup acceleration within the Israel Ministry of Defense."

⁴ *Translator's Note:* The Israel Security Agency (ISA; also known as Shin Bet or Shabak) is Israel's domestic security service, widely documented by human rights organizations for employing abusive and unlawful interrogation methods, including torture, and for carrying out extensive surveillance of Palestinians in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank. For further reading, see B'Tselem's [summary of the ISA's practices](#) and their related [publications](#) on the topic.

⁵ *Translator's Note:* Rafael's official full name in Hebrew is "מערבות לחימה מתקדמות בע"מ" – "רפאל", which translates literally as "Rafael – Advanced Combat Systems Ltd". In Hebrew, the word "לחימה" can mean both "combat" and "fighting." The company has chosen a less aggressive English name, "Rafael – Advanced Defense Systems Ltd.," likely for commercial purposes. For more information about Rafael, see [here](#).

⁶ *Translator's Note:* For more information about Elbit, see [here](#).

established research and development centres adjacent to academic institutions to strengthen research collaborations.

- **Exclusion of students:** Military-academic collaborations, and the militarization processes they promote in academic institutions, lead to the direct and indirect exclusion of students from these institutions, including by worsening the eligibility conditions for students in student housing admission, the deterrence that military service sections in registration forms create for those who did not serve in the military, the threatening presence of weapons in academic institutions, and the fear of expressing opinions and thoughts in the presence of soldiers.
- **Silencing of academics:** Academics who express opposition to military values and militarization processes in academia are ignored, silenced, and sometimes even fired. For example, in the case of lecturer Nizar Hassan, who was fired by Sapir College because he asked a soldier in a course he taught not to come in a military uniform, or in the case of the Erez program for commanders in combat units which requires the faculty at Tel Aviv University to refrain from criticising the military and its soldiers.⁷
- **Military indoctrination:** Military-academic collaborations sometimes lead to militaristic discourse by lecturers in academic courses, which is often directed at soldiers in the class, and to the creation of new programs for soldier-students or the adaptation of existing programs according to the military's needs.

Key Conclusions

- Academic institutions must completely cease military-academic collaborations, whether in academic programs, recruitment of teenagers and students, research, or the placement of military facilities on campus.
- Academic institutions must prohibit the entry of weapons and persons in military uniforms into academic campuses (and, at the very least, enforce existing firearm regulations.)
- Academic institutions must cease their collaboration in the recruitment of students and teenagers for military, security, intelligence, and military-industrial bodies, agencies and companies, and prohibit their entrance into campus.

⁷ The Erez military-academic program began operating at Tel Aviv University in the 2024–2025 academic year. The final agreement between the university and the Ministry of Defense was not made public.

- Academic institutions must encourage critical discourse and independent research regarding government policies, the military apparatus, and the militarization of Israeli society.
- Academic institutions must remove discriminatory admission sections from registration forms and eligibility conditions for academic student housing.
- Action must be taken to create mechanisms for civilian oversight and ongoing limitation of collaborations with military institutions and to turn academia into a civilian institution, without military influences, that encourages ethnic, gender, class, and ideological diversity.

For the responses of the academic institutions and the Council for Higher Education to the claims in the report, see the [appendix of responses](#).

FOREWORD TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

APRIL 2026

The research and writing of this report were completed in November 2023. Since then, the report has undergone a series of legal and censorship reviews, which delayed its publication. The Hebrew report was finally published in May 2025, and this English edition is a translation of the Hebrew report without additional updates.

During these two years, the reality between the river and the sea changed beyond recognition. The Gaza Strip, with its institutions and civilian spaces – hospitals, universities, schools, kindergartens, libraries, mosques, churches, museums, heritage sites, infrastructure, and homes – was almost completely destroyed. At the time of finalizing this English edition, the official estimates by United Nations agencies count 72,265 fatalities and 171,959,⁸ including at least 64,000 children that have been killed or maimed.⁹ Thousands more are still buried under the rubble. According to several studies published in the past year, conservative estimates are that the actual number of deaths from military operations, either directly or “indirectly” (for example, due to extreme malnutrition, the spread of diseases, and lack of access to medical equipment and treatments), is likely at least four times greater, reaching hundreds of thousands of people, which could amount to 10% of the entire Gaza population.¹⁰ Approximately 1.9 million Palestinians, close to 90% of the total Gazan population, have been displaced from their homes. According to the recent report by the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel,¹¹ as well as other reports from international human rights organizations, and analysis by genocide researchers and legal experts, Israel’s military actions in the Gaza Strip amount to severe crimes against humanity, foremost among them genocide.¹² In its ruling from May 2024, the International Court of Justice have warned against the plausibility of a genocide taking place in the Gaza Strip,¹³ and six months later the

⁸ These are the latest available data from the OCHA’s weekly [Reported impact snapshot](#).

⁹ [“Two Years of Hellish War Have Devastated Gaza’s Children”](#), UNICEF, October 8, 2025.

¹⁰ This estimate is based on the article [“Counting the dead in Gaza: difficult but essential”](#), published in the medical journal *The Lancet* on July 20, 2024. According to the researchers, in similar conflicts in recent years, the number of indirect deaths was 3 to 15 times higher than the number of direct deaths. At the time of the article’s publication, 37,396 Palestinians were reported to have been killed directly by the Israeli army. Under the conservative assumption that for every one direct death there are four indirect deaths, the researchers estimated at that time that the number of indirect deaths was 186,000 people.

¹¹ UN Human Rights Council, [Legal Analysis of the Conduct of Israel in Gaza Pursuant to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide](#), A/HRC/60/CRP.3 (September 16, 2025).

¹² See [New Profile’s statement on the Gaza genocide](#) from January 2025.

¹³ [Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip \(South Africa v. Israel\)](#), Order of May 24, 2024, International Court of Justice.

International Criminal Court prosecutors have issued arrest warrants for war crimes against Israeli PM Netanyahu and Minister of Defence Gallant.¹⁴

In the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the Israeli military had killed over 1,039 Palestinians, including at least 225 children¹⁵, and in Lebanon – close to 4,000 people, including over 310 children.¹⁶ On December 8, 2024, after the fall of the Assad regime, the Israeli army also took control of territories in Syria, and as of the time of writing, it still holds them. In Israel, approximately 1,750 people, including approximately 56 children, were killed in the Hamas-led attack on October 7 and during Israel's subsequent military operations. Also, in Israel, about 143,000 residents have been displaced from their homes, in Lebanon over 1.3 million residents, and in the West Bank around 40,000 Palestinian residents. While the Israeli and foreign citizens who had been held captive by Hamas and Islamic Jihad have been released, thousands of Palestinians are still held in Israeli prisons and detention centers, many under administrative detention without indictment or trial.¹⁷

In what has been defined by a wide range of UN experts¹⁸ and academics¹⁹ as a 'scholasticide' or 'educide,' Israel's military campaign targeted all academic institutions in the Gaza Strip. According to UNESCO, the Israeli military had destroyed or damaged 79% of higher education campuses in Gaza, and 88,000 Gazan students lost access to higher education.²⁰ When conditions allowed, a few of the displaced managed to continue their studies and academic work from inside the tent camps. Thousands of students and scholars, as well as university presidents and deans, were killed by the Israeli military. According to several reports, dozens of libraries, archives, museums, monuments, archaeological sites, and other buildings of historical or artistic significance have been damaged or destroyed.²¹

¹⁴ Karim A. A. Khan KC, "[Statement of ICC Prosecutor Karim A.A. Khan KC on the Issuance of Arrest Warrants in the Situation in the State of Palestine](#)", International Criminal Court, November 21, 2024.

¹⁵ See UNRWA, [Situation Report #201 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem](#), December 17, 2025.

¹⁶ See UNICEF Lebanon, [Shattered Childhoods: The Catastrophic Toll of War on Children in Lebanon](#), October 2025.

¹⁷ As of December 2025, Israel holds approximately 9,300 Palestinian prisoners, including 3,350 administrative detainees held without trial and 350 children. This does not include all individuals held in military detention centers. See Addameer, "[UPDATE: Palestinian Political Prisoners in Israeli Occupation's Custody – December 2025](#)", December 16, 2025. According to a report published by B'Tselem in August 2024, Palestinians prisoners suffer from systematic physical and psychological abuse, torture, humiliation, inhuman living conditions and denial of basic needs. For B'Tselem's full report, *Welcome to Hell, The Israeli Prison System as a Network of Torture Camps*, See [here](#).

¹⁸ UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "[UN Experts Deeply Concerned over 'Scholasticide' in Gaza](#)", April 18, 2024.

¹⁹ Lourdes B. Habash and Ibrahim S. I. Rabaia, "[From Iraq to Gaza: Educide as Colonial Strategy](#)", *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* (November 19, 2025).

²⁰ [In Gaza, UNESCO supports students amid a devastated education landscape](#), October 2, 2025.

²¹ Librarians and Archivists with Palestine (LAP), [Israeli Damage to Archives, Libraries, and Museums in Gaza, October 2023–January 2024](#), February 2024; UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "[UN Experts Deeply Concerned over 'Scholasticide' in Gaza](#)", April 18, 2024; UNESCO, "[Impact on Cultural Heritage in Gaza](#)", updated November 2025; Dan Sheehan, "[Israel has damaged or destroyed at least 13 libraries in Gaza](#)", *Literary Hub*, February 1, 2024.

The destruction of the Palestinian academia in Gaza by the Israeli military is a distorted mirror image of the state of academia in Israel, which reflects the accelerated process of hyper-militarization that characterised the Israeli society as a whole since October 2023. This process has also led to the shrinking of the already small pockets of resistance. For example, the majority of journalists and media outlets in Israel also enlisted in the war effort and betrayed basic journalistic integrity by adopting a militant and sometimes genocidal discourse, by providing the Israeli public with a partial and distorted picture, and often by fuelling attacks on any voices within the civil society that attempted to challenge such positions. In this atmosphere, Israeli academic institutions remained silent as the Israeli state has been committing war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the destruction of the higher education system in Gaza. Worse, the Israeli academia often adopted militaristic rhetoric and continued to cooperate in various ways with the military, Israel's security establishment, and the arms industry, including in the research and development of military technology and weapons, and training soldiers.²²

As detailed in a report by Academia for Equality,²³ Israeli academic institutions actively collaborated with the growing trend of political persecution, including suspension and dismissal without a hearing, of those who spoke out against Israeli policy or expressed solidarity with the besieged and bombed residents of Gaza. This persecution was enacted most intensely against Palestinian citizens of Israel. The mindset enabling this persecution was constructed, cultivated, and amplified over many years of subordinating academia to continuous militarization processes in the name of so-called national security. This mindset, alongside the current military violence, only emphasizes how important and vital it is to expose the extensive and dangerous connections between Israeli academia and the entire security establishment, with the military at its core. Understanding these connections is essential for the liberation of academia, as a physical and intellectual space, from the militaristic mindset, for the sake of protecting critical spaces and freedom of expression and toward creating a new political culture of dialogue and reconciliation.

As previously mentioned, the data for this report were collected up to about a month after the start of the war, the genocide and the educide. The complicity of Israeli academia in these destructive campaigns of the Israeli government and military in the past two years could have added a massive volume of significant data regarding the issues described in this report.

An early comprehensive documentation of collaborations between Israel's military apparatus and its academic institutions was a report by the Alternative Information Center,

²² See, for example, Anat Matar, "[In its fight against fascism, Israeli academia remains blind to a basic truth](#)", *+972 Magazine*, February 26, 2025

²³ Academia for Equality, "[Silencing, Censorship, and Free Speech Violations in Israeli Academia](#)", June 2025.

published in 2009.²⁴ In addition, recent academic research by Dr. Maya Wind has been providing essential historical and cultural context to some of the findings described in this report.²⁵ However, we believe that the continuous reality picture, unique analysis and new findings this report presents, including the extensive collaborations between Israeli academia and the military, could help to understand the mobilization of Israeli academia for the Israeli military effort and genocide even after November 2023, and until the present day.

As indicated, this English edition is a translation of the Hebrew report, without content adjustments or updates. Only when necessary to clarify or contextualize terms or formulations that appeared in the Hebrew original, minor adjustments have been made, and/or footnotes were added, marked as ‘Translator’s Note’ to distinguish them from footnotes that appeared in the original Hebrew version. The chapter titled ‘terminology’ was the only one that has been significantly adjusted, to include explanation of certain terms used throughout the report and certain choices of the translators. Furthermore, it is not a perfect translation: our resources are limited, and our priority was to meet an urgent need expressed by international academics, student groups, and activists for accessible, up-to-date, and comprehensive information on the state of military–academic collaboration in Israeli academia. The translation was carried out by a group of activist-academics from Academia for Equality, including Orian Zakai, PhD; Yariv Vershinsky, MA; and Mia Joskowicz, coordinated by Dr. Itamar Shachar.

We live in a dark time. A great shadow hovers over the work of Israeli academia, and over Israeli society as a whole. We hope that this report will allow for a sober look on at least one aspect of the situation we are in, and will stimulate thought on new ways of resistance, in and out of academia. We particularly hope that this English edition could enrich the long-standing movement led by Palestinian scholars and activists, as well as international scholarly initiatives and student-led movements that have emerged in recent years.

New Profile, April 2026

²⁴ Uri Yacobi Keller, [Academic Boycott of Israel and the Complicity of Israeli Academic Institutions in the Occupation of Palestinian Territories](#), *The Economy of the Occupation*, no. 23 (Jerusalem: Alternative Information Center, 2009).

²⁵ Maya Wind, *Towers of Ivory and Steel: How Israeli Universities Deny Palestinian Freedom* (London: Verso, 2024).

INTRODUCTION

*Winning the tender defines the University of Haifa as responsible for the academic training of the core command of the IDF for the coming years. We are proud to open our doors to the IDF forces and be the academic home of the security forces.*²⁶

University of Haifa President, Prof. Ron Rubin, following the university's win of the military colleges tender

*...Following this move, many international companies established development centers and opened branches in the Advanced Technologies Park to take part in the training and employment of soldiers and graduates of the IDF's elite units. Ben-Gurion University of the Negev takes an active and central part in the move, including creating new academic programs adapted to the military's needs.*²⁷

The Office of the Vice President for Regional and Industrial Development at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, following the "IDF's Move to the South" project

*The Hebrew University and the Student Union warmly support all students who are soldiers, studying at the university during compulsory service, reserve duty, and in the special collaborative programs of the university with the IDF and other security organizations of the State of Israel [...] We are proud of and support the Hebrew University's faculty members who serve in the reserves, parents of soldiers, or whose spouses serve in the IDF, in times of both routine and emergency.*²⁸

An ad in the print edition of *Haaretz* following the Carola Hilfrich affair²⁹

In Israeli society, the boundaries between the civilian and the military spheres are blurred. It is almost impossible to find spaces where there is no presence of military elements, law enforcement elements (who often adopt military models of hierarchy and discipline) and/or private arms and security technology companies. Furthermore, the concept of military "security"³⁰ is ingrained in most social and public institutions. Often, this entails an implicit and invisible set of values that excludes political, ethnic or religious groups and individuals who are unable or unwilling to enlist for various reasons.

²⁶ Zarchovitz, Omri. "10 Million NIS per Year: University of Haifa Wins the Military Colleges Tender", *Globes*, June 13, 2018 (in Hebrew).

²⁷ "Military and Academia", Ben-Gurion University (in Hebrew).

²⁸ Kadari-Ovadia, Shira. "The Hebrew University Apologized for the 'Unusual Incident' Between the Lecturer and the Student in Uniform", *Haaretz*, January 7, 2019 (in Hebrew).

²⁹ See [Chapter II: Space](#).

³⁰ *Translator's Note:* In Hebrew, the word 'ביטחון' (*Bitahon*) can mean both 'security' and 'safety.'

Militarism is an ideology that gives the military and the values it promotes a central place in civil society over other needs, concepts, and ideas. A militaristic culture encourages hierarchical, patriarchal, non-democratic, and violent structures, as well as values of aggression, sacrifice, and war. At the policy level, militarism is expressed in a government that intentionally outlines policies aimed at maintaining a permanent state of war, in order to justify the continuous prioritization of military needs over civilian needs. This is done, for example, by allocating a significant portion of the state budget to the military and state security and intelligence agencies, fostering the military industry, embedding educational and cultural content that encourages enlistment in the military, obedience, aggression, and a culture of war in the curricula of schools and academic institutions, and promoting legislation that benefits the military and those who serve or have served in it. This governmental system of priorities favors military components over essential civilian needs such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure. At the socio-civilian level, militarism is expressed in the adoption of the military's hierarchical structure by civilian institutions and individuals; in full and uncritical support for military actions; in the placement of former military personnel in key positions in politics, industry, and the media; and in various forms of participation in the military's recruitment efforts. Militarization is an ongoing process aimed at bringing the public closer to the military and to military values, by making these values central within civilian discourse and civilian spaces.

Since the state's establishment, a mandatory conscription law has been in effect in Israel, which requires all citizens and permanent residents to enlist for military service upon reaching the age of 18. The ideal of "the people's army" as an army that represents all segments of the national collective, derives from this law, and is often promoted by military personnel, politicians, and media outlets, even though in practice the military refrains from conscripting certain groups³¹ and grants automatic exemptions to others. According to publicly available military data, most Israelis do not even complete full military service.³² Nevertheless, the military still plays a significant role in Israeli civilian

³¹ *Translator's Note:* According to Israeli law, every permanent resident of the state is obliged to serve in the military (regardless of citizenship status). Historically, and as a matter of policy, the military did not enlist Palestinians, supposedly because it assumed they were loyal to the Palestinian people and not to the state. That said, over the years, the military made efforts to recruit Palestinians from Druze communities, and Palestinians from areas the state and military deem as less "hostile". In 2025, and due to a significant shortage of manpower, the military made attempts to recruit Palestinian youth from the North of Israel.

³² *Translator's Note:* According to 2024 [data](#) from the Knesset Research and Information Center (RIC), among those born in 2004, approximately 55% of Israelis (50% of men and 60% of women) did not enlist. A report by Haaretz from 2017 estimates that around 15% of enlisted men and 8% of women do not complete their military service. This suggests that an average of 60% (57% of men and 63% of women) of Israelis do not enlist or complete their military service. The data is incomplete and remains an estimate, as the Israeli military rarely releases comprehensive data regarding conscription in order to maintain the ethos of "the people's army".

life, as evidenced by the portion of the state budget that goes to the military; the centrality of military personnel in social and political protest movements; the centrality of the military industry in the Israeli economy; the presence of senior former military personnel in key positions in the government and Israeli industry; the frequency of militaristic discourse among large parts of the population; and the military's involvement in Israel's education system.

Militarism in Israel is fundamentally grounded in a patriarchal system that is constructed and maintained by Jewish hegemony. From the outset, the military system prioritizes men in the screening and placement processes for military roles, and rewards behaviors traditionally perceived as masculine, such as forcefulness and aggressiveness over those associated with protection and defense. Similarly, the military primarily recruits and promotes individuals who belong to the Jewish national group and the dominant hegemony, while military force and power are directed almost exclusively toward those who do not belong to this national group or to the national values promoted by the state. The structure of the military's hierarchical system and military values are replicated in civilian institutions and lead to the preference of those at the top of this hierarchy – those who served in the military in general, and in particular heterosexual men, combat soldiers (especially those who served in “special,” “elite,” or “commando” units), and those who served in “white-collar” roles in the military – for example, in intelligence units, computing, and weapons development. Thus, these spaces often exclude those at the bottom of the real and symbolic military hierarchy: those who did not enlist, especially non-Jews, women, veterans of non-elite combat units (for example, regular infantry units and border patrol), and soldiers who were tracked to serve in “blue-collar” and non-combat roles such as quartermasters, drivers, and cooks.³³

However, militarization excludes not only people, but also ways of thinking, research topics, and methodological approaches, while privileging others. This is evident, for example, in the case of researchers who choose or are compelled to collaborate with military-industrial companies in order to obtain research grants; researchers who refrain from investigating subjects for which information remains classified by the military or by other security and intelligence agencies; researchers who refrain from pursuing topics that might provoke criticism and therefore risk being unfunded or suppressed; Israeli researchers who fear collaborating with Palestinian scholars; and lecturers

³³ *Translator's Note:* Historically, the Israeli state and military pursued a policy of tracking Mizrahi Jewish Israelis (Jewish-Arabs) and other Jewish-Israeli minority groups (such as immigrants from the former USSR) into “blue-collar” military roles. This was achieved in part through assessment criteria in military screening processes that deliberately discriminated against these groups, and through programs that encouraged youth from these communities to enroll in military high schools, where they were trained for technical or blue-collar military occupations.

who avoid expressing opposition to military values or military actions, and thus also refrain from challenging their students, out of concern for possible sanctions from academic institutions.

Another significant aspect of a militarized society is the lack of research and critique regarding the centrality of the military in civilian life, and the negative effects of promoting military values on society. This absence stems, among other factors, from the deliberate concealment of data by the military and other security and intelligence agencies and companies, as well as the exclusion of those who do not identify with, or actively oppose, the military system and the values it promotes. Such exclusion occurs through denial of funding or withdrawal of financial support for research, prevention of academic promotion, or even threats of dismissal and harassment by right-wing organizations, such as *Im Tirtzu*.³⁴

Therefore, we believe that a thorough examination and review of the various ways in which militarization processes manifest in civilian institutions and spaces, and the sharing of this information with the public, are essential for enabling a meaningful and critical discourse. Such discourse has the potential to challenge the assumptions underlying the integration of the military and its values into civilian life, and the prioritization of the military over fundamental civilian needs. This study seeks to examine one aspect of the militarization processes in Israeli society and to review them within the framework of academia in Israel. In addition, the research aims to examine how these processes affect the existence of academia as a free and critical civilian space, and the lived realities of those who enter its gates.

Historically and socially, academia has been perceived by many, both in Israel and internationally, as a space that seeks to foster a just, egalitarian, diverse, and solidaristic society, one that values education, free thought, and broadening horizons. However, academic institutions in Israel, which include public, semi-public, and private universities and colleges, consciously choose to collaborate with military institutions and industries. In doing so, they actively choose to participate in a militarized social system that produces oppression, violence, and inequality. These collaborations occur with almost no criticism, transparency, oversight, or reporting of any kind, and there are few voices of protest against them, both within academic institutions and in the wider public.

³⁴ *Translator's Note: Im Tirtzu* (in Hebrew: "אם תרצו", "If You Will It") is an Israeli Zionist, right-wing NGO, primarily known for its efforts to delegitimize Israeli human rights organizations, groups, and activists. The organization maintains an online database, "Know your lecturer", which lists the names and contact details of Israeli academics alleged to be "extreme leftist" or "pro-Palestinian." *Im Tirtzu* also monitors instances of perceived "politicization" in academia and operates approximately 20 student organizations within Israeli universities, organizing protests on campuses. The NGO is ideologically aligned with the Israeli far-right and has alleged ties to the Israeli government.

The fact that academic institutions in Israel serve as a fertile ground for militarization, which enables and fosters, among other things, military-academic research collaborations, training of soldiers, direct involvement of the military apparatus in curricula and research programs, the use of academic campuses for military purposes, and the recruitment of students into state security and intelligence agencies and the arms industry, deserves thorough examination and public debate. This report seeks to highlight these phenomena and analyze their effects, so that, together with civil society organizations, researchers, activists, and activist groups in the field, we can develop critical discourse and effective forms of resistance.

The presence of the military and the military industry in academia appears natural, almost transparent, and even self-evident by much of the Israeli public. This is partially due to the existence of extensive and ongoing cooperation among various powerful actors, aimed at maintaining the military and military industry at a position of preeminence within civilian society.³⁵ This report seeks to deconstruct these ideas and promote a critical approach to the status of the security forces and military industry within academia, as well as to the collaborations that have been created and developed between them and academic institutions in Israel.

According to the website of the Council for Higher Education, Israel has 61 institutions of higher education, including 10 universities, 20 subsidized colleges, 9 non-subsidized colleges, and 22 academic colleges of education.³⁶ This report focuses primarily on militarization in public universities for several reasons: the relatively small number of universities compared to the large proportion of students enrolled in them; the abundance of publicly available information on militarism in these institutions compared with that available for colleges; the preference of the Ministry of Defense and the military industry to collaborate with universities over colleges; and the greater response from academics and students in universities both in completing the questionnaires distributed for the report and in their willingness to be interviewed for this research. To complete the picture of the impact of militarization processes on higher education in Israel, further in-depth research is required to examine the forms of militarism and the extent of collaboration between colleges and the Ministry of Defense and the military industry.

Over the years, several articles, reports, and books have discussed militarism in the education of children and youth in Israel, including the book “Militarism in Education” edited by Hagit Gur; “The Educating military: The military’s Relations with the Civilian

³⁵ *Translator’s Note:* For further reading about militarism and militarization processes in Israeli society, see Rela Mazali’s [“Militarization, Conscription and Superpower Policies in Israel: A Brief Overview”](#).

³⁶ Council for Higher Education in Israel, “Higher Education Institutions”.

Education System”, edited by Yagil Levy and Nir Gazit³⁷; and the report “Child Recruitment in Israel” by New Profile, written by Amir Givol, Neta Rotem, and Sergeiy Sandler.³⁸

However, to date, very few studies have directly examined the question of militarism within Israeli academia and its various layers. Still, in recent years, several reports and projects have been published concerning the collaboration between academia and the security forces and military industry, which are worth noting. Among others, the *Hamushim* (Armed) project, which operated within the Coalition of Women for Peace, published a report in 2017, titled “Not an Ivory Tower: The Defense Industries and Universities in Israel” on the collaboration between several arms companies and universities; the “Complicit academy” database, created in 2017 by Academia for Equality, which contains various materials on militarism, racism, oppression, and resistance in Israeli and Palestinian academia; as well as numerous articles, blog posts, and media reports. Notable examples include the essays “University” and “What Enables Asa Kasher?” by Anat Matar; “Happy to Serve: The Universities in Israel and the Shin Bet” by Idan Landau; and “Academia, Weapons, and Occupation: How Tel Aviv University Serves the Interests of the military and the Security Industry” by Yaniv Kogan.³⁹ These publications and the database contain fascinating material demonstrating the various forms of collaboration between the Ministry of Defense, the military industry, and academic institutions. They are highly recommended for further reading.

The relevance of a current and updated review that maps and analyzes collaborations between academia, the military, security and intelligence agencies, and the military industry, stems not only from the passage of time since these phenomena were examined, but also from a vital need to address the lack of public discourse and awareness regarding the extent to which higher education institutions in Israel are mobilized for the security apparatus and the degree to which they actively participate in the ongoing socio-political-economic process of militarization.

³⁷ *Translator’s Note:* These edited volumes have not been translated into English, but English-language relevant works include: Hoffman, T. (2022). [Weaponized volunteering in schools: The discourse of volunteering and pre-military education in Israeli high schools](#). *Current Sociology*, 71(2), 235-252.; and Grassiani, E., & Gazit, N. (2025). Civilian ‘soft’ militarism through informal education in Israel: learning to protect and connect to the land. *Critical Military Studies*, 11(1), 39-58.

³⁸ Amir Givol, Neta Rotem, and Sergeiy Sandler, [Child Recruitment in Israel](#), New Profile, July 2004 (in English).

³⁹ *Translator’s Note:* Anat Matar’s essay “[University](#)” can be read in full at *Political Concepts*. To date, “What Enables Asa Kasher?” has not been translated into English; however, some of its arguments appear in Matar’s book, [The Poverty of Ethics](#) (Verso Books, 2022). The Hebrew text is available [here](#). For further resources, see the “[Complicit Academy](#)” database; the report [Not an Ivory Tower](#) (Hebrew); Idan Landau’s article, “[Happy to Serve: Universities in Israel and the ISA](#)” (Hebrew); and Yaniv Kogan’s article, “[Academia, Weapons and Occupation: How Tel Aviv University Serves the Interests of the Military and Arms Industry](#)”, at *Zo Haderech* (Hebrew).

As will be shown later in this report, almost all major academic institutions in Israel, and particularly the public universities, collaborate with militarism in one form or another. They contribute, directly or indirectly, to the refinement and optimization of the Israeli occupation mechanism in the West Bank, to military aggression against the Gaza Strip, and to the exclusion from academic spaces of students and scholars who do not conform to militaristic values and perspectives. The impact of these collaborations is felt far beyond Israel/Palestine. As several studies by civil society organizations and journalistic investigations have shown, weapons developed by the DDR&D, Elbit, Rafael, and many other arms companies with which numerous academic institutions collaborate, are exported to other countries. In turn, these weapons have been used in ways that violate the human rights of civilians, protesters, journalists, political activists, and marginalized communities, after many were first tested on the Palestinian population.⁴⁰

We hope that this report will serve as a preliminary body of knowledge that will help to understand, critique, challenge and work to dismantle and correct these problematic processes. We also hope it will serve as an outlet and source of inspiration for future research that will expand the body of knowledge on this subject, and for the dissemination of findings and insights in ways that are useful and educational for groups and activists working in the field.

As part of the work on this report, we chose to focus on five main aspects: “Chapter I: Study Programs,” examines military-academic programs and military involvement in academic instruction and curriculum development; “Chapter II: Space” deals with the presence of uniforms and weapons in academic spaces and the existence of military compounds on campus grounds; “Chapter III: Students” deals with the aspects of student life, including recruitment efforts by the security establishment and industry within academic institutions through collaborations and special events, as well as discrimination based on non-military service in admissions to academic institutions and affordable on-campus student housing; “Chapter IV: Research Collaboration,” deals with joint research and development projects between the military industry, the security establishment, and academic institutions; and “Chapter V: Perceptions of Collaboration,” examines how academics and students perceive militarism in academia and the collaborations between academia and the military establishment and industry.

This report is intended for the academic community, for activists, and for anyone interested in understanding the ways in which militarism and militarization processes are expressed in ostensibly “neutral” civilian spaces, and how they are concealed and shielded from public criticism.

⁴⁰ For more information, see New Profile’s [DIMSE – The Database of Israel’s Military and Security export](#).

METHODOLOGY

Data collection and analysis were completed as of November 2023.

The work on this report employed several research tools: Freedom of Information requests submitted to military and security bodies and several academic institutions; questionnaires in Hebrew and Arabic distributed to students and academics; interviews with academics and students; and research based on open sources – including academic articles, news reports, various websites, and publicly available databases.

Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

Freedom of Information requests (commonly known as FOI requests) were submitted to seven public institutions to which the Freedom of Information Law applies: the Ministry of Defense, the IDF Spokesperson's Unit, and five academic institutions – the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv University, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, the University of Haifa, and the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology.

The selection of these academic institutions was based on several main considerations: first, at the outset of the research, these were the institutions for which the most publicly available information existed regarding their collaboration with the military establishment and industry, and the FOI requests were intended to expand the existing body of material; second, these are the institutions subject to the Freedom of Information Law; third, the study sought to focus on large academic institutions with substantial student populations; and finally, these universities are the most prominent research institutions in Israel. Naturally, given that there are 61 institutions of higher education in Israel, this selection also involved an element of arbitrariness.

From the Ministry of Defense and the IDF Spokesperson's Unit, we requested information regarding their engagements with academic institutions in Israel. From the academic institutions, we requested information regarding their engagements with the military, the Ministry of Defense, the military industry, the ISA, and the Mossad – Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations (hereunder Mossad). Information was requested for the years 2019-2023.

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and Tel Aviv University chose not to provide any information. The University of Haifa completely ignored our freedom of information request, despite repeated reminders of its legal obligation to respond within the timeframe stipulated by the Freedom of Information Law. The IDF Spokesperson's Unit insisted that it was in the process of collecting the requested information; however, as of the publication of this report, no response had been received. The Technion – Israel Institute

of Technology provided only a minimal and cumbersome response. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem provided partial information.⁴¹

The Ministry of Defense ultimately agreed to provide limited information, following several follow-up communications between New Profile's legal counsel and the Ministry's Freedom of Information Department in the months after the request was submitted. The Ministry explained that it was unable to provide comprehensive data on all of its engagements with academic institutions, as doing so would require examining each contract and agreement in detail – a process that, they claimed, would take considerable time. They added that for them, this explanation could have served as a sufficient justification to completely evade providing a response to the request. Nevertheless, the official responsible for implementing the Freedom of Information Law at the Ministry of Defense decided to allow the disclosure of a small portion of data that did not require individual review. This limited information was eventually provided.⁴²

As can be seen from the list of non-responses and partial responses above, no institution fully and fairly complied with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Law. Submitting Freedom of Information (FOI) requests in Israel is, in effect, an endless farce – most institutions do not comply with the requirements of the law and deliberately delay the release of information. Large public institutions are well aware that most citizens and organizations submitting such requests lack the resources necessary to initiate legal proceedings that would compel them to disclose the information.

Even when an institution ultimately agrees to release information, the data provided is often partial and difficult to decipher or process. In matters relating to “security,” these bodies frequently invoke various legal clauses and classify the information as confidential for reasons of state security.

The concealment of information from the public, and, in particular, from academics, activists, and civil society organizations who submit such requests, is part of a broader, deliberate pattern of concealment: an avoidance of scrutiny and a denial of the essential tools required for historical and political analysis, as well as for challenging militarization processes and the policies of Israel's security establishment.

⁴¹ For a detailed discussion of the institutions' responses, see [Chapter IV: Research Collaboration](#).

⁴² For more details on the Ministry of Defense's response, see [Chapter I: Study Programs](#). The response letter can be read [here](#) (in Hebrew), and the full list of disclosed engagements can be found [here](#) (in Hebrew).

Questionnaires

The questionnaires distributed for this research included questions addressing various aspects of militarism in academia. In total, two types of questionnaires were distributed – one to students, and the other to faculty, both in Hebrew and Arabic. The questionnaires for faculty were intended for academic staff members, without differentiation according to their academic position or rank within the institutional hierarchy. In total, 340 questionnaires were completed. Of these responses, 313 fully completed questionnaires were analyzed, excluding participants who did not indicate their religious or gender identity, or who identified as “atheist,” as the number of such responses was limited, and it was therefore deemed difficult to include them meaningfully in the grouping analysis of the data. It is important to emphasize that this research, and the questionnaires within it, are descriptive in nature, and do not claim to present a statistically representative sample of the general population or of the groups surveyed.

In total, 268 responses were received for the student questionnaire distributed in Hebrew, and 16 responses for the version distributed in Arabic. For the academic questionnaire, 51 responses were received for the Hebrew version, and 5 for the Arabic version. Of these, 263 student responses and 50 academic responses were analyzed.

The disparity in response numbers between the questionnaires likely stems from two factors: the small number of faculty compared to students, and the limited number of online spaces where faculty could be reached. While students typically participate in numerous Facebook student groups, only one Facebook group intended for academics in general was found – Bashaar Academia IL – and most of the responses likely came from members of Academia for Equality, to whom the questionnaires were widely distributed.

Since most of the responses to the academic questionnaire came from members of Academia for Equality, an organization advocating for the democratization of Israeli academia and primarily comprising academics with left-leaning economic and political views, the results from the academic staff may be skewed.

Additionally, few responses were received from Palestinians in both questionnaires. This likely reflects several factors. First, Palestinians constitute only about one-fifth of all students in Israeli academic institutions and just over 5% of faculty.⁴³ Second, Palestinian

⁴³ *Translator's note:* According to a [press release](#) by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, in the 2023/24 academic year, Palestinians accounted for 5.3% of faculty in Israeli academic institutions (in Hebrew); According to a [press release](#) by the Council for Higher Education in Israel, in 2024 Palestinian students accounted for 19.2% of all students (in Hebrew).

citizens of Israel may naturally be wary of providing personal information or political opinions, particularly on sensitive topics such as militarism, due to years of targeting by Israel's security and intelligence establishment, as well as by right-wing actors within academia and academic institutions. Third, although the questionnaire was available in Arabic, the announcements and publications about the questionnaires were written in Hebrew, which may have discouraged some Arabic-speaking students from participating.

In terms of religion, among all respondents, 277 identified as Jewish, 19 as Muslim, and 14 as Christian. In terms of gender, 155 identified as women, 151 as men, and 7 as non-binary. Regarding affiliation with academic institutions, 118 respondents belonged to Tel Aviv University, 61 to the Hebrew University, 20 to the University of Haifa, 19 to the Technion, 18 to Ben-Gurion University, 6 to the Open University, 5 to Bar-Ilan University, 3 to Sapir Academic College, 2 to the Weizmann Institute, and only one affiliation for each of the following institutions: Ariel University, Shenkar, Weizmann Institute, Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design Jerusalem, Emek Yezreel College, Oranim College, Shalem Academic Center, Achva Academic College, and Reichman University.

As these data indicate, there is a significant disparity in the number of respondents across different academic institutions. Therefore, the responses and their analysis should not be considered a representative sample of students or academic staff in Israeli academic institutions.

Interviews

Interviewees were given the option to participate under their real names or anonymously. Some of the faculty who were interviewed for the research agreed to be identified, whereas all student participants requested anonymity. Where only a first name appears, it is a pseudonym. Sometimes the gender of the interviewees was also obscured. The choice of young students to remain anonymous, for fear of harassment and retaliation from their fellow students, families, or academic institutions, is understandable. The same is true for early-career academics or those without a permanent position. It should be noted that all interviews were completed by the end of summer 2023.

Open Source Research

As part of the work on this report, materials were collected through research using publicly available sources: news articles, opinion pieces, academic articles, scholarly literature, digital magazines, as well as websites and social media pages of military, security, and intelligence organizations, military industry companies, and academic institutions.

TERMINOLOGY AND TRANSLATION

Several terminology choices in this report warrant clarification.

The term “military industry” is used and not its parallel “defense industry”, except in quotations from other sources. In Israeli discourse, the words “security” and “defense” are often used in their various forms as a euphemism for “military” or other terms to give them a passive aura of defense and protection, while obscuring the offensive and militaristic connotations of the word “military.”

The term “arms industry,” which is indeed more accurate than “defense industry,” was also avoided, since it still omits another significant layer in the scale and scope of this sector in Israel. The military industry in Israel is among the largest in the world and one of the leading arms exporters⁴⁴, due to extensive government support, the free training of workers provided by the military, its role as a primary supplier of weapons to the Israeli military and other state security agencies, and the opportunity to test these weapons on civilian populations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. For these reasons, the term “military industry” more accurately reflects the mutually beneficial relationship between this sector, the military, and other institutions within the security establishment, as well as the industry’s dependence on them in multiple aspects.

The term “security establishment” is used to refer to Israel’s various military and security agencies and organizations, including the military (IDF - Israel Defense Forces), the Police, the ISA, and the Mossad. Collectively, these are also commonly referred to as Israel’s “security forces.”

In this translation, we generally preferred the term “military” to describe the IDF, unless a direct reference is made to Israel’s ground forces (in which case we opted for “army”). In Hebrew, the word “צבא” (*Tzava*) means both army and military. We concluded that the term “military” is more accurate and broadly describes all military divisions (Ground Forces, Air Forces, Navy, Intelligence, etc.). The Israeli military’s official name, IDF [Israel Defense Forces], was avoided because of the deceiving use of “defense”.

The Hebrew term *Malshab* (מלשׁב), an acronym for *Muamad Le’shirut Bitachon* (מועמד לשירות ביטחון) literally translates to “candidate for security/defense service.” The Israeli Defense (Security) Service Law regulates the conscription of youth in Israel, both

⁴⁴ [“SIPRI Arms Transfers Database”](#), Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (in English).

citizens and permanent residents, into the military. It defines any citizen or permanent resident of Israel, from the beginning of their conscription process (upon receiving the first call-up for military screenings, usually around the age of 16) until their enlistment, as a “candidate for security service.” We have used this English term throughout this English edition.

Throughout the report, and particularly in chapter I, “Study Programs”, we chose the term “soldier-students” to describe the participants of military-academic programs. In Hebrew, they are usually referred to as *Atudaim* (the closest English equivalent would be “cadets”). As opposed to regular students, the “soldier-students” are studying to gain the necessary skills for their military jobs, are officially considered part of the military manpower and are subject to the military’s authority. Their unique status will be explained at length in the first chapter.

Also throughout this report, interviewees described as “Palestinians” refer to Palestinian citizens of Israel (or Palestinians with an Israeli citizenship). This fractured citizenship status is what enables them to attend, study and work in academic institutions in Israel. This group is also commonly referred to as “1948 Palestinians” (many of whom were internally displaced during the Nakba), and in Israeli-Zionist discourse as “Arab Israelis.” Correspondingly, respondents identified with the hegemonic Jewish majority in Israel are described as “Jewish-Israelis”.

CHAPTER I

STUDY PROGRAMS

This chapter deals with the militarization of academic learning, focusing in particular on the phenomenon of military-academic study programs conducted through collaboration between academia, the military, the security establishment and the military industry.

The chapter consists of four parts: the first presents the information obtained from the Ministry of Defense in response to our Freedom of Information request; the second reviews the military academic reserve system; the third maps out special military-academic programs; and the fourth covers several additional military-academic programs and presents two case studies drawn from these programs.

“THE SPEARHEAD”: MILITARY-ACADEMIC STUDY PROGRAMS

We are proud of the win, which is further evidence of the high academic level of the Hebrew University, which will now also participate in the academic and leadership aspects of training Intelligence Corps soldiers through the challenging “Havatzalot” program – the spearhead of intelligence personnel.⁴⁵

Prof. Asher Cohen, President of the Hebrew University, following the University’s win of the tender to operate the Havatzalot program

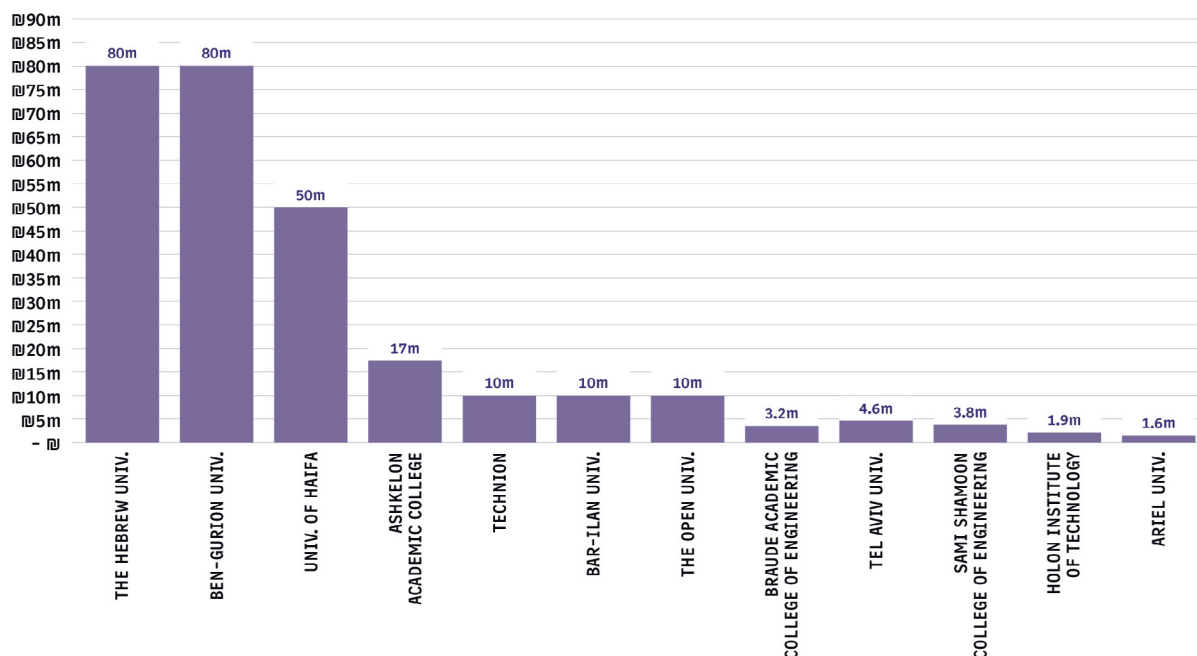
According to the response received to our freedom of information request submitted to the Ministry of Defense, the scope of financial cooperation between the military and academic institutions in the years 2019-2022 regarding academic programs and training for soldiers, career personnel, and reservists amounted to ILS 269,275,031.33.⁴⁶ It is important to note that the information provided by the Ministry of Defense is highly partial: the response included only collaborations related to academic studies and professional training, and the Ministry chose to provide information only for agreements signed between March 2019 and December 2022. This is despite our request for data on all agreements between the Ministry of Defense and academic institutions, not only those related to studies, as well as information for 2023, which was not provided.

Nevertheless, the information provided indicates multidimensional cooperation, both in terms of financial scope, which explains, at least in part, the willingness of academic institutions to collaborate with the military, and in terms of the extent of the collaboration it represents. According to the Ministry of Defense’s response, all universities in Israel (except the Weizmann Institute), as well as a significant number of colleges, collaborate with the Ministry of Defense and the military in some form in the academic training (and thus also the military training, directly or indirectly) of soldiers in compulsory service, reservists, and career personnel.

⁴⁵ Editorial staff of the Ministry of Defense website, “The Hebrew University Will Lead the ‘Havatzalot’ Program,” Ministry of Defense (14.04.2019).

⁴⁶ See the full response letter from the Ministry of Defense to our Freedom of Information request [here](#), and the appendix to the response, which includes the list of engagements, [here](#).

**FINANCIAL VALUE OF AGREEMENTS SIGNED BETWEEN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE
AND ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS REGARDING ACADEMIC STUDIES FOR SOLDIERS
AND MILITARY-ACADEMIC RESERVISTS BETWEEN 2019–2022,
ACCORDING TO INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE, IN MILLIONS OF ILS**



* In the appendix provided by the Ministry of Defense, the Ashkelon Academic College appears as 'Ashkelon Academic College – under the responsibility of Bar-Ilan University.'

** The figures in this chart are rounded.

As seen in the table above, the Hebrew University and Ben-Gurion University lead in the scope of their cooperation with the Ministry of Defense regarding academic studies for academic reserves, active-duty soldiers and other military personnel, with each holding agreements valued at approximately ILS 80,000,000 between 2019 and 2022. Following them is the University of Haifa, with agreements worth around ILS 50,000,000. Fourth is Ashkelon Academic College, with agreements valued at approximately 17 million ILS, followed by the Technion, Bar-Ilan University, and the Open University, each with agreements totaling roughly ILS 10,000,000. Tel Aviv University comes next, with agreements worth about 4.6 million ILS, not including its 2023 agreement with the Ministry of Defense to operate the Erez program, estimated at around 15 million ILS for the first three years of the program.

It is beyond the scope of this report to detail all 111 agreements between the Ministry of Defense and academic institutions regarding studies, some valued at several hundred thousand ILS and others at millions. However, the bottom line is clear: the scale of cooperation between the Ministry of Defense, the Israeli military and the academic institutions in training soldiers and officers is immense, providing substantial financial

benefits to the institutions and high-quality, prestigious training for the military. As will be shown later in this report, this training covers a wide range of disciplines used by many military units, including areas such as arms and cyber development, military intelligence, and combat operations.

ACADEMIC RESERVE PROGRAMS

The military's goal is for every student to learn what is necessary for them in times of emergency. There is room to include military-related topics and subjects of interest to the military in the vast majority of disciplines, in the humanities, natural sciences, and medicine. Additionally, consideration should be given to the possibility of incorporating military-related topics into research projects, some of which may be conducted with stipends [scholarships] provided by the military.⁴⁷

Lieutenant Colonel Asa Lafen, Training Department, the Israeli Military

In the early 1950s, Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, ordered the establishment of a unique program in the Israeli military, designed to allow the military to maximize the knowledge and experience that had already been accumulated in Israeli society at that time – the Academic Reserve.⁴⁸ In 1951, the program was established and began operating in cooperation with the two largest academic institutions of the time: the Hebrew University and the Technion.

Over the seventy-two years since the first cohort of Academic Reserve soldiers (Atudaim) – the new soldier-students – began their studies, the program has gradually grown and expanded to nearly all academic disciplines, as well as to additional tracks created specifically for them by the security establishment and academic institutions.

The academic reserve was established as part of a broader initiative by the military at the time, based on the understanding that in order to justify the high budgets it demanded, maintain social approval for compulsory conscription, and encourage widespread conscription, in compulsory service, career service, and reserves, it needed to harness the

⁴⁷ Ne'emani, E. (2021). "Shaping Patterns of Intervention Between the IDF and the Civilian Education System in the Early Years of the State," *Bein HaK'tavim*, 26–27, pp. 135–150. See [here](#) (in Hebrew).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 135–150.

civilian education system for its purposes. These efforts were directed both at elementary, middle, and high schools, where there was already a captive and easily influenced audience for indoctrination, and at academia, where the military believed there was an educated, affluent, and powerful class that held extensive knowledge that could be utilized in various ways, for example, by recruiting reservists with higher education.⁴⁹

The military's plan was to bring about a broad and significant change in the academic curricula so that they would include substantial military content. The Hebrew University initially offered slight resistance, but ultimately the military achieved its goal, albeit at first in a somewhat moderated form – several committees were established at the university, in cooperation with military representatives, to examine possibilities for collaboration between the parties. The Faculty of Humanities at the Hebrew University agreed with the military on a special military training component within the regular study programs, as well as the establishment of a special reserve unit for students, who would also receive military training within the faculty. University representatives also argued that “steps should be taken to coordinate research conducted in the military with research at the Hebrew University.”⁵⁰

The negotiations with the Technion were even more successful – a subcommittee was established at the Technion to examine significant changes to the curricula according to the military's needs. The enthusiasm of the Technion representatives and their immediate response to the military's demands were likely not accidental – the Technion's president at the time was Yaakov Dori, the first Chief of General Staff of the Israeli military, who openly supported collaboration between the military and the Technion.⁵¹

Since the military's partial success in incorporating militaristic content into academic curricula, much has changed. Today, military-academic cooperation is more extensive than ever, with numerous military-academic programs and a wide range of military-academic research being conducted in partial or full collaboration with the military, various security agencies, and the military industry.

According to the Academic Reserve information booklet for the 2023-2024 academic year, the Ministry of Defense currently offers Candidates for Military Service 42 regular academic reserve tracks in various fields of study, 4 additional tracks within the framework of the Atidim program, and 8 “elite programs” for outstanding candidates.

⁴⁹ Ne'emani, E. (2016). *From the Battlefields to the Field of Civic Education: The IDF's Program for Shaping the Education System in the Early Years of the State*. In N. Gazit & Y. Levy (Eds.), *An Army Educating a Nation: The Military's Relations with the Civil Education System* (pp. 60–87). (Ra'anana: The Open University).

⁵⁰ Ibid. pp. 60-87.

⁵¹ Ibid. pp. 75–79.

As of the 2023–2024 academic year, Academic Reserve studies are conducted at numerous academic institutions, including: the Hebrew University, Ben-Gurion University, Tel Aviv University, University of Haifa, Technion, Ariel University, Bar-Ilan University, Safed Academic College, Reichman University, Lev Academic Center, Holon Institute of Technology, the Academic College of Engineering, Sami Shamoon College of Engineering, Ort Braude College, Afeka – Academic College of Engineering in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem College of Engineering, Kinneret College, Ruppin Academic Center, Holon Institute of Technology, Shenkar College of Engineering and Design, Tel-Hai College, Hadassah College Jerusalem, WIZO Academic Center Haifa, Emek Yezreel Academic College, Sapir Academic College, the College of Management, and Peres Academic Center.⁵²

The Atudai, the archetype of the Israeli soldier-student, navigates between two seemingly opposing worlds. The first is the academic world, which perhaps represents in their mind's eye the ideals of free and liberal education, critical thinking and debate, curiosity, experimentation, and the discoveries of late adolescence. And the second, the military world – a rigid, hierarchical, dogmatic, and violent system.

According to the Academic Reserve information booklet for 2023-2024:

During the academic year, most military activities will take place between semesters in order to minimize disruption to your studies. These activities include basic training, courses (according to your role in the IDF), study days, monitoring days, conferences, and workshops.

This means that in practice, the soldier-students undergo military training during their academic studies. This is also reflected in Section 3(c) of the Academic Reserve contract, in which the future soldier-student commits:

I am aware that during academic breaks, military activities are conducted in which my participation is mandatory, and which form an integral part of the Academic Reserve program.

The significance of this paragraph from the Academic Reserve booklet and Section 3(c) of the Academic Reserve contract is that, although soldier-students in the Academic Reserve are officially classified by the military as being on a “deferment of service,” this designation is artificial, and is intended to allow the military to train the soldier-students according to its needs without shortening the duration of their compulsory military service. They are de

⁵² Israel Defense Forces, *The Academic Reserve: 2023–2024. Academic Reserve: Information booklet for the Academic Year* (Ramat Gan: Israel Defense Forces, 2023–2024).

facto soldiers for two main reasons: first, because they are recruited and go through the basic training pipeline before beginning their academic studies; and second, because according to Section 9(a) of the Academic Reserve contract, the soldier-student acknowledges that during the “service deferment” period they are counted as part of the military’s reserve forces.⁵³ This enables the military to integrate military training into the soldier-student’s academic studies, which, as noted above, does indeed occur in practice.⁵⁴

Under this contract, the soldier-students commit to a rigid career service period of three to six years, in addition to their years of academic study and their compulsory service of two years and eight months. The significance of this “rigid career service” commitment (which teenagers are required to sign), as opposed to regular career service, is that in regular career service, the individual can cancel their contract with the military in exchange for a fine. In contrast, the commitment to rigid career service cannot be canceled by the soldier in any way; it can only be terminated by the military itself, “according to the needs of the system.”

The military’s definition is stated in Military Order 3.0501, section 27(a) of the Career Service Regulations:

Rigid commitment – a commitment to career service for which military regulations specify that it cannot be terminated unilaterally by the soldier.⁵⁵

Section 12 of the Academic Reserve contract also clarifies the soldier-students’ status in the eyes of the military:

I am aware of and hereby commit to report for reserve duty or regular service whenever required, whether by official call-up order, a telephone notice from the Academic Reserve Division, or any other military authority, and by any other means as directed.

An examination of these sections of the Academic Reserve contract and the Career Service Regulations shows that the soldier-students are fully considered soldiers in every respect. It also reveals that the Academic Reserve program, which requires teenagers to sign a highly restrictive and draconian contract with the military, raises numerous moral failures.

⁵³ *Translator’s note:* The term “reserve” carries two distinct meanings. First, it refers to academic reservists (*Atuda*), who are students deferred from mandatory service to complete a degree; this report refers to them as “soldier-students.” Second, it refers to the reserve forces (*Milu’im*), consisting of personnel who have completed their mandatory or career service and remain part of the military’s manpower pool until exempted.

⁵⁴ See [Academic Reserve Program Enrollment Form](#) (in Hebrew).

⁵⁵ See [Supreme Command Instructions](#), July 15, 1956, 9 (in Hebrew).

First, unlike regular students, soldier-students cannot discontinue their studies at will. Second, their commitment to the military, and thereby also to academia, is made at a very young age, when they are still largely unfamiliar with both the military system and, in most cases, the academic system. Third, these are essentially soldiers in pre-military and military training who acquire higher education in order to use it within the framework of their military service. The decision of academic institutions to cooperate with this military program raises serious political and ethical questions.

The content of the Academic Reserve contract and the manner in which it is signed also raise many questions. The military and academic institutions invest significant effort in recruiting teenagers for the various Academic Reserve programs.

One of the key incentives promoted by the military to persuade teenagers to join the military-academic reserve track is the “Academic reserve encouragement grant”, intended to cover the full cost of their academic degree. In some programs, it also includes partial subsidies for living expenses during their academic studies.

What the military neglects to mention to these young recruits, and which is hidden in Clause 83 of the Academic Reserve contract, is the signatory’s commitment that:

I am aware of and agree that the military authorities will review my academic progress and the course of my military service. If I fail to complete my studies, am not assigned to a professional [military] position, am reassigned from my [military] professional role, or fail to fulfill my career service commitment for any reason, I will be obligated to fully repay all grants I have received.⁵⁶

In other words, the “grant” that the military offers the youth who choose the military-academic reserve track is conditional on many variables, some of which are entirely beyond the control of the soldier-student, such as not being assigned to a relevant military position, being reassigned to a different role, or being discharged from career service due to cutbacks.

Another clause in the Academic Reserve contract, which teenagers are required to sign, stretches the limits of reason, even by military standards. According to Clause 3(i) of the contract, the signatory declares that:

I am aware that during the deferment period, if I am found unfit for service, or temporarily unfit for service, for any reason, the military authorities shall

⁵⁶ See note 54 above.

nonetheless be entitled to determine that I am fit for military service under special conditions.

In other words, even if during their academic studies, compulsory service, or career service (as mentioned, a period that can last for almost ten years) the soldier is found unfit for service, whether due to a physical medical condition or a mental health issue, the military can still force them to “volunteer” for service. In this sense, the status of the soldier-students is even worse than that of soldiers in compulsory service, who are at least entitled to a discharge if they are found unfit for service.

In addition, soldier-students are primarily accountable to the military, and not to the academic institutions in which they study, and they are denied the academic freedom and independence afforded to regular students. According to Clause 3(b) of the Academic Reserve contract, participants commit to:

Obey any instruction issued by the Israel Defense Forces regarding my studies in a particular department, program, or field of study, within the framework of the aforementioned profession, whenever I am required to do so.

It appears that this clause is deliberately worded in broad terms in order to give the military unrestricted authority to intervene in the academic studies of soldier-students. This may include, for example, prohibiting them from registering for certain courses or overruling other academic decisions made by the students or by the faculty teaching them.

Furthermore, Clause 5(a) of the same contract states that the teenager signing it agrees that the military authorities may order the termination of their studies and their return to active service at any time, “due to lack of academic progress, inappropriate conduct (including behavior inconsistent with the standards expected of an IDF officer), or if required by the needs of the IDF at that time.”

In practice, this means the military can order a soldier-student to suspend their studies at any moment, based on conditions it interprets at its own discretion – or simply due to unspecified “military needs” – meaning any reason whatsoever.

This clause also raises the question of whether “behavior inconsistent with the standards expected of an IDF officer” might include, for instance, expressing political views that do not align with those of the military. Moreover, the very requirement to uphold “the standards expected of an IDF officer” is puzzling, given that most soldier-students go through officer training only after completing their academic studies. It again clarifies that in the eyes of the military, these students are considered soldiers in every respect, and

as such are expected to behave obediently and in accordance with military procedures even before they have officially started their compulsory military service.

The final clause in the Academic Reserve contract worth examining appears in Part B of the agreement, titled “Declaration of the Atudai [Academic Reserve Participant] on the Duty to Report”, in which the Atudai declares that they authorize the military to receive directly from the academic institution all information related to their academic studies:

I, the undersigned, hereby authorize the IDF authorities to request and obtain from the academic administration and/or the faculty of the department, school, or program in which I am enrolled as part of the Academic Reserve track, and from any other relevant party as required under the circumstances – any and all information and details regarding my academic status, whether directly or indirectly, at any time they deem necessary. This authorization shall remain in effect for as long as I study within the framework of the Academic Reserve program.

As is evident from the wording of the Academic Reserve contract – signed by teenagers while they are still in high school – and from the military’s Career Service Regulations, the academic reservists are soldiers in every respect, both in the eyes of the military and in the eyes of the academic institutions that comply with military directives in their treatment of these students, unlike its treatment of regular students.⁵⁷

As the above paragraph indicates, the obligation of academic institutions is first and foremost to the military and its needs, not to the well-being and privacy of the students. Likewise, these sections unequivocally indicate that the students who study in the various reserve tracks are de facto soldiers in training. Therefore, academic institutions cannot credibly claim that they merely allow the soldier-students to study under the same terms as any other student, since Academic Reserve participants are soldiers whose first and foremost duty is to the military – and the academic institutions themselves are required to report directly to the military regarding their academic progress.

As will be shown later in this report [both in the subsection on “Elite Programs” in this chapter and in Chapter IV: Research], even if academia did not collaborate directly with the Ministry of Defense, the army, and the military industry in research areas, it still trains the soldiers and employees who will serve or work in these bodies and companies in the future.

⁵⁷ [“Atuda”](#), New Profile (in Hebrew).

The academic institutions themselves also actively participate in recruiting teenagers for the military-academic reserve programs. The exposure conference for the academic reserve programs is held annually at one or more of the major academic institutions hosting the program, in addition to special events and conferences organized jointly by the military and university for specific Academic Reserve tracks. For example, in 2011 the conference was held at Tel Aviv University. In 2014, the conference was held on two separate dates, a few days apart – the first at Ben-Gurion University, and the second at Tel Aviv University. In 2016, the conference was held at the Hebrew University; In 2017, at the Hebrew University, the Technion, Ben-Gurion University, and Bar-Ilan University. In 2019, the conference again took place on the campuses of Ben-Gurion University and Tel Aviv University. In 2022, an “Academic Reserve Encouragement Conference” was held at Ben-Gurion University and Bar-Ilan University, and in 2023, the event was again hosted by Ben-Gurion University, Bar-Ilan University, and the Technion.

In addition, the academic institutions themselves also take part in marketing and promoting the Academic Reserve tracks they offer in cooperation with the military. Presumably, for academic institutions, more soldier-students who choose to study in their various reserve tracks translates into greater income from tuition fees paid by the Ministry of Defense, students with significantly lower dropout rates due to the binding conditions imposed on them by the military, and the “prestige” associated with collaboration with the military in Israeli society. It is also possible that institutions are also motivated to collaborate with the military on these programs out of a broader strategic consideration, hoping that such collaborations would lead to other collaborations with the Ministry of Defense, the military, and the military industry, for example in joint research initiatives.

The “exposure” conferences for the military-academic reserve programs include, among other things, lectures and panel discussions featuring current Academic Reserve students and graduates serving in the military; lectures by university representatives; an area with information booths about the various academic tracks within the program, staffed by soldier-students who are in the midst of their military service; another area with information booths representing the main academic institutions that host Academic Reserve programs; a military booth providing information and answering questions about the selection and admission process; and a booth for the Atidim program, which aims to integrate youth from Israel’s “geographic and social periphery” into the military-academic reserve tracks.

There are many examples of the marketing of reserve programs and recruitment events by academic institutions. For instance, on various occasions over the years, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev hosted the national information conference of the Academic Reserve at the Student Center on campus and advertised it on its official social media outlets and on the university’s website:



Image text: *This coming Wednesday, the Atuda [Academic Reserve] Conference is coming to Ben-Gurion University.*

[Announcement about the Atuda Academic Information Conference at Ben-Gurion University, Facebook page of Ben-Gurion University, 2018.](#)

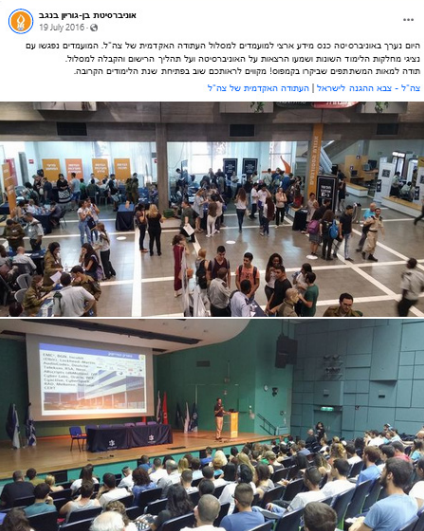


Image text: *Today, a national information conference for candidates of the IDF Atuda Academic Program was held at the university. The candidates met with representatives from the various academic departments and attended lectures about the university and the registration and admissions process for the program. Thanks to the hundreds of participants who visited the campus! We hope to see you again at the start of the upcoming academic year.*

IDF - Israel Defense Forces | IDF Academic Reserve.

[Announcement about the Atuda Academic Information Conference at Ben-Gurion University, Facebook page of Ben-Gurion University, 2015.](#)



Image text: *Dear candidates for security service, please note: this is the last opportunity to register for the Atuda Academic Program Information and Orientation Conference at Ben-Gurion University [...] in collaboration with all academic institutions, [military] technological and professional units, and representatives of the [military] Academic Technological Human Resources Administration.*

[Announcement about the Atuda Academic Information Conference at Ben-Gurion University, Facebook page of "IDF Academic Reserve" 2023.](#)



Image text: *What do you want to be when you become officers? National Information Conference 2016, Atuda Academic Program.*

Announcement on the Ben-Gurion University website about the recruitment event for the IDF Atuda Academic Program, held at the campuses of Ben-Gurion University, Technion, and Bar-Ilan University.

These images are just an example of the marketing efforts made by academic institutions to promote the military-academic programs, and their part in recruiting youth for military roles.

In a leaflet published by the official Facebook page of the “IDF Academic Reserve,” teenagers were invited to a “Data Science Track Introduction Conference,” with the participation of “Major R. – Head of the Data Science Directorate; Professor Yaakov Nagel – Brigadier General (Res.), former head of the National Security Council; Colonel S. – the IDF’s Data Science Referent; a representative of the IDF’s Academic Reserve Section; a representative of the Technion; a representative of the University of Haifa; a representative of Ariel University; a representative of Ben-Gurion University; and a representative of the Hebrew University.” The leaflet was decorated with the emblems of the participating universities alongside the official insignia of the IDF Academic Reserve unit.

Beyond the active collaboration of academic institutions in training soldiers and officers for military roles, their cooperation in military recruitment efforts is particularly troubling. It targets impressionable teenagers and involves the investment of institutional resources in a domain that universities are not meant to engage with. Moreover, by doing so, academic institutions take an explicit stance on the issue of military enlistment in Israel, and specifically on the Academic Reserve programs, both of which are highly controversial within many segments of Israeli society.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Aviv Bartela, “IDF Data: From Which High Schools Do Most Atuda Students Graduate?,” *Ynet*, June 14, 2013 (in Hebrew).

YOUTH PROGRAMS AND STUDENT EXPERIENCES

The military's involvement in academic life extends even to teenagers enrolled in excellence programs within Israel's higher education system. The Future Scientists Center, a center for gifted students that is supported by the Ministry of Education and the Maimonides Fund, operates several youth academic programs across universities in Israel, including Alpha, Idea, Odyssey and Olympia, as well as Askola, the alumni network of these programs.

Yasmin, a Palestinian who studied in Odyssey (Academic Studies Program in the Sciences) at one of Israel's major universities, described the program's militaristic aspects and its role in the early recruitment processes of teenagers into the military:

The program is very militaristic. I'm Arab, but I had a lot of friends who had their first call-up order and screenings for the IDF and all that, and it's very present in the program. They sent us many invitations for Zoom meetings about IDF programs. There's the [meetings on the] Academic Reserve, [military] Intelligence programs, and preparation meetings for the first call-up order."

According to Yasmin, these aspects were never mentioned during the admission process for the program:

I don't think it should be within the framework of this program. When we applied and were tested for it, they didn't present it as having a military component. To some extent, I think the goal of the program is ultimately to train the new generation of academics for the army. That makes me very angry. Maybe also because I went to an Arab school, maybe my experience is different... because we usually don't talk about the military in school or in my city. [In this program] you see that they are constantly talking about the army and the IDF, both my friends and the program itself are very focused on it. It's impossible to have a conversation without the word 'army' coming up.

Among other activities, Askola, the alumni network of the Future Scientists Center, organized a pre-enlistment conference for participants approaching military service. Following the event, program participants received an email titled "Letter to Candidates for Military Service – [Name of one of the Future Scientists Center programs] IDF," which read:

Students of the Future Scientists Center programs,

The Askola team – the alumni network of the Future Scientists Center – thanks you for your participation in the pre-enlistment conference for the IDF. In order to expose and make relevant information accessible to you, we have prepared a list of links to a variety of programs and tracks to deepen your knowledge before the selection and screening process.

The email continued with an attachment containing a long list of links to military programs, including various Academic Reserve tracks, Intelligence units, and information about the “Weapons Development Center”, the “Cyber and Security Center”, the Academizatzia (Academization) track, and other “elite” military programs.

Another email sent the program’s students, carrying the logos of the Ministry of Education, the National Cyber Directorate in the Prime Minister’s Office, and the Future Scientists Center, read [emphasis in the original]:

How can they [participants in the Odyssey program] contribute to the military? Graduates of the Odyssey program have proven autodidact abilities and research-based scientific knowledge in the fields of science and cyber. Throughout their studies in the program, they engage with intellectual challenges and complex problem-solving tasks. Odyssey students earn academic credits during the program, and some even complete their bachelor’s degree before beginning their military service. In recent years, program graduates have integrated into special units within the IDF, contributing to research and development across a variety of fields.

Another leaflet, also under the auspices of the Future Scientists Center, the National Cyber Directorate in the Prime Minister’s Office, and the Ministry of Education, urges the high school students to attend conferences for candidates for security service:



Image text: *Save the dates:
Conference in preparation for the First Draft Order
Conference in preparation for the Selection Process |
Academization and Atuda
Conference in preparation for the Selection Process |
Intelligence and Other Units.*

Excerpt from an email sent to participants of the Future Scientists Center program.

Laila, a Palestinian who had also previously studied in one of the programs for outstanding youth at the Future Scientists Center, at one of the Israel's major universities, describes another aspect of the alienation created by the collaboration between these youth academic programs and the military:

I have many friends who went into intelligence units and I didn't really feel comfortable talking with them about political things. Friends from my academic program [...] Of course, anyone who's going to such units has to undergo a security clearance, and when they go through it, for example, their list of Instagram followers is checked. They actually unfollowed me when they went through the clearance. There were a few friends who stopped following me, they didn't tell me but I assumed that was the reason, and our connection was cut off after that.

According to Noor, a Palestinian student at the Technion, the sense of alienation is also present in regular university courses due to the militarized discourse of lecturers:

Of course, this is a part of the militaristic culture, but even lecturers at the Technion start talking about their military experience, or in the middle of a lecture they begin giving examples from their time in the military. I also had other Arab friends who told me. This phenomenon peaked during the events of May 2021, when the atmosphere in campus was very sensitive and tense.⁵⁹ My friends who study electrical engineering told me how in a lecture on ethics in the workplace, they were given an example – ‘If we were bombing a building in Gaza, what would you consider from an ethical standpoint – the fact that there are children in the building, or that there are terrorists inside?’, something like that. I think that from the outset this is not an example you should give when talking about ethics in the workplace. I had a lot of friends who just walked out of the lecture after that. I think this is not only connected to the militaristic aspect, but also to the normalization of everything that's being done, for example in Gaza – normalizing it as something purely “security-related”.

According to Eyal, a Jewish-Israeli law student at Bar-Ilan University, militarism is also present in regular degree classes:

The presence of soldiers in the classroom definitely affects the atmosphere. I study law, so there are many political, current, widely discussed topics, and it's very noticeable. When we talk about international law and Israel's position

⁵⁹ *Translator's note:* Noor refers to the outbreak of violence in May 2021, following protests against a decision by Israel's Supreme Court on the eviction of six Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah, Jerusalem.

within it, and someone says something slightly critical or complex about Israel, you can feel the glances toward the soldiers, as if people are waiting for them to respond. It does affect the discourse, unequivocally. I don't feel like it silences anyone, but it's very present in the space, something that you can't ignore. People think twice before speaking – it's a fact that there are soldiers in the classroom, and everyone's aware of it. It's noticeable. I'll give a slightly more depressing example. One professor, who herself was a law academic reservist officer in the military, and in her classes there are a few soldiers in training – the examples she gives are often things like: 'you are soldiers, you are a lawyer in the military,' as if it's completely normative that 'you are representing the military in an operation in Gaza' and so on and so forth. So it's present even among the professors. I think the presence of soldiers clearly affects both the discourse and the content. Not drastically, but in the kinds of examples, contexts, what topics are dealt with, and edge [law related] cases that are discussed. Mainly, it makes this perspective – the army lawyer, the state lawyer representing the army – seem like a legitimate and normative one, alongside, say, the public defender or an NGO lawyer. It becomes part of the space in a legitimate and open way, without any acknowledgment of the complex baggage attached to it, and that's a choice the lecturers make. These guys [the soldiers in the classes] are either in the Academic Reserve track who will later serve in the military, or they're already serving and taking supplementary courses or completing a master's degree in law.

Michal, a Jewish-Israeli undergraduate humanities student at the Hebrew University, describes similar experiences of alienation and the subordination of academic knowledge and studies to a militaristic culture:

I tried studying Arabic at the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, but the textbook had an Israeli security-oriented perspective and the atmosphere in the class was the same, and so I stopped my studies there because of that. It's truly tragic that it's like this, that you can't learn Arabic and about Islam like any other language and culture, and especially when it comes to the language and culture of the place where we live. In addition, I don't think there is enough sensitivity from the professors toward Arab students.

From the accounts of Noor, Eyal, and Michal, it appears that the militaristic discourse used by some of the faculty creates a sense of alienation among students who did not serve in the military or who disagree with its actions. This is particularly true for Palestinian students, given that military violence is mostly directed against Palestinians. Beyond alienation, such discourse sometimes causes students to drop classes, as Noor described, or even change their academic fields altogether, as in Michal's case. It can be assumed

that Michal's experience at the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at the Hebrew University is connected to the fact that soldier-students from the Intelligence Corps' Havatzalot Academic Reserve program study in that department. According to Eyal's description, lecturers' choice to employ militaristic language and use examples related to the military sometimes stems from the presence of soldier-students in class, especially those in the Academic reserve programs. The use of military scenarios and military discourse to illustrate academic material excludes from the discussion those who have not served in the military and those who view the military's actions as immoral when it directs its violence toward certain groups. If academia indeed seeks to be a diverse space that enables multiple voices and fosters open, critical discussion of state institutions, laws, and widely accepted ideas, then its discourse should be explicitly non-militaristic.

In this subsection, we broke down the concept of "Atuda" (the academic reserve track) into its various components and demonstrated why collaboration of academic institutions with military training programs, as well as their assistance to the military in recruiting youth, is invalid for several reasons.

First, because the soldier-students effectively function as soldiers, and as such, their primary obligation is to the military, its needs, and its procedures. Consequently, their academic and civil freedom is entirely revoked. Second, because the contract signed by the Atudaim while they are still teenagers binds them to the military system for many years, with very limited possibilities for discharge, even when their health condition requires it. Third, because cooperation in the recruitment of youth into the military is a controversial practice in civil society, especially when it comes to Academic Reserve programs, and all the more so when civilian academic institutions take part in it. Finally, at the end of this subsection, we demonstrated how military presence on campus and the militaristic discourse it entails may marginalise students and exclude them from the academic space.

"ELITE" PROGRAMS

As of the time of writing this report, and insofar as it could be verified, at least eleven military-academic "elite" programs for candidates for security service operate within academic institutions in Israel, along with several other military-academic programs that are not part of the military's official Atuda (academic reserve) system. The purpose of this sub-chapter is to map nine of these programs, which the army markets to teenagers

as “honors programs” for “high-quality” candidates for security service. Emphasis is placed on the problematic aspects of these programs, which include, among other things, the military-academic recruitment of teenagers, the channeling of youth into roles involving the development of weapons and military intelligence technologies, the militarization of academic spaces through the establishment of military bases – which include military surveillance and security – on campus grounds, the increased presence of military uniforms and weapons, and the preferential access to student housing granted to military program participants at the expense of other students.

TALPIOT PROGRAM

Academic Institutions: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem | Military Partners: DDR&D and the Israeli Air Force

The *Talpiot* program was established in 1979 with the aim of training soldiers who were “carefully selected” for roles in research and development of weapons and technological infrastructure for the military and the Ministry of Defense. The program is jointly managed by DDR&D, the Israeli Air Force, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In its early days, the program was completely secret and open only to male soldiers.⁶⁰ The soldier-students in the program are called “*Talpionim*.”⁶¹ During the first three years of service, which are counted as their compulsory service years, the participants in the program are considered cadets. Cadets are trainees in military programs who receive officer ranks at the end of their training. The term refers to future officers in programs such as the Officers’ Course, the Pilot Course, the Naval Officers’ Course, the *Talpiot*, *Psagot*, *Havatzalot* and *Adarim* military-academic programs, and in contrast to the *Atudaim* (academic reservists) who are in pre-military academic training.

Thus, *Talpiot* cadets function as full soldier-students, studying for a bachelor’s degree in physics, mathematics, or computer science (or combinations thereof) in parallel with various military trainings as well as performance of various military trainings and duties, such as guard duties, physical training, and cleaning. As part of the military training, the “*Talpionim*” undergo special courses in various military branches, including several-

⁶⁰ Tali Heruti-Sover, “[Talpiot Project: At the Top of the IDF’s Most Wanted List](#)”, *TheMarker*, September 8, 2010 (in Hebrew).

⁶¹ *Translator’s note:* The addition of the suffix “-nim,” or “-kim,” to the names of the cadets of the military-academic programs is common. The American-English equivalent to this practice would be, for example, the addition of “-ie” or “-y” to a name, as in turning Thomas to Tommy or Margaret to Maggie. Turning the program’s military name into a personal diminutive blurs the fact that these are soldiers fulfilling a military role, some of whom are trained for the research and development of weapons.

week-long training series that involve exercises and lectures about each branch's military needs – for example, its role within the military system, the combat systems it employs, and its weapons development processes.

Before beginning their academic studies, Talpiot cadets undergo a pre-basic training course, followed by full combat training at the Paratroopers' training base. After completing the combined academic-military program, which lasts about 40 months, the soldier-students receive the rank of lieutenant from the military and a bachelor's degree from the Hebrew University. They then continue with six years of mandatory career military service, during which they serve as team leaders, researchers, and developers in military and Ministry of Defense R&D units.

After completing their nine-year military service, many of these former soldier-student-weapons-developers go on to work for Israel's military industry. Thus, the military-industrial-academic complex completes its cycle: the university gains additional students, significant financial income, and prestige as an institution collaborating with the military – one of Israel's most powerful entities – leading to further military-academic collaborations with companies in the military industry. The Ministry of Defense and the military gain highly educated soldiers trained at a university of international standing. The military industry gains academically trained, military-experienced professionals skilled in weapons development.

Hence, openly and explicitly, the Ministry of Defense operates a military-academic training program at one of Israel's largest universities, designed to train soldiers for roles in the development of new weapons systems that contribute to the maintenance and intensification of the Israeli occupation in the West Bank, ongoing military aggression in Gaza, increased profit for the military industry, global militarization, and the arming of non-democratic regimes.

Among the program's graduates is Evyatar Matanya, a professor of government and head of the Security Studies program at Tel Aviv University, who established and headed the Israel National Cyber Directorate (INCD), and who conceived the Intelligence Corps' Havatzalot military-academic program [see [A Look at the Past and Present: The Case of Havatzalot](#) in this report], whose training program structure was modeled after that of the Talpiot program. An article on Israel Defense Magazine described Talpiot as a “rare bird among the world's armies”, adding that “only South Korea has chosen to replicate this model. Nowhere in all other armies in the world is there a program like the Israeli one.”⁶²

⁶² Ami Rojkes Dombé, “[The Sharpest in the Pencil Case](#)”, *Israel Defense Magazine*, September 22, 2022 (in Hebrew).

Recruitment of youth for the program begins already in high school, similarly to screenings for other positions in the Israeli military. The Talpiot unit directly contacts high schools throughout the country to obtain the data of students who meet its academic thresholds and invites them to pre-draft screenings. Candidates must also meet combat-level medical profiles.⁶³ Talpiot cadets study both in regular university courses together with civilian students, and in closed courses, intended only for them. During their academic-military studies, the program's soldiers live at the Air Force's Staff Training Institute base, a closed military base located within the Hebrew University's Givat Ram campus since 2012.

In response to the Freedom of Information request we submitted to the Ministry of Defense, the reply regarding agreements signed between the ministry and academic institutions in the years 2019–2022 listed four agreements between the Hebrew University and the Ministry of Defense that explicitly relate to the Talpiot program. Each agreement is valid for 39 months, i.e., a full training cycle of the program. The first agreement (2019–2022) is valued at ILS 7,783,319.45; the second agreement (2020–2023) at ILS 7,835,791.95; the third agreement (2022–2024) at ILS 9,900,860.57; and the fourth agreement (2022–2025) at ILS 9,666,246.39. Thus, between the years 2019–2025, the Hebrew University's revenue from its cooperation with the Directorate of Defense Research and Development (MAFAT) in the Ministry of Defense for the military-academic Talpiot program amounts to ILS 35,186,218.36.

PSAGOT PROGRAM

Academic Institutions: Tel Aviv University, the Technion, and Ben-Gurion University | Military Partners: DDR&D and the Academic Reserve (Atuda).

Like the Talpiot program, *Psagot* is also managed by a special directorate within the DDR&D. The program is branded as “the excellence program” (and in other places, “the flagship program”) of the Academic Reserve. According to the website of the *Meitav* unit, the military unit responsible for the screening and placement processes for all conscripts and soldiers, the *Psagot* program is “an elite program in which high school graduates

⁶³ *Translator's note:* Around the age of 16 (typically 10th or 11th grade), most Israeli citizens and permanent residents receive their "First Call-up" (*Tzav Rishon*). While the draft is mandatory, certain groups are excluded, most notably the majority of Palestinian citizens of Israel. This initial screening at a military recruitment center includes a medical examination, psychometric testing, and a personal interview to determine a candidate's "military profile" and potential placement. The medical profile is a score ranging from 21 to 97. A score of 21 denotes total unfitness for service, while the maximum score of 97 indicates eligibility for all units, including elite combat roles. Within Israel's militarized youth culture, these scores carry significant social weight; it is common for teenagers to compare profiles as a mark of status, and some candidates may even withhold information regarding pre-existing medical conditions to secure a higher score and access to prestigious units.

with strong academic and interpersonal abilities are trained for roles at the core of the IDF's and the security establishment's research and development systems.”⁶⁴

During the summers between their academic study years, program participants undergo military training, which includes a “unique series of introductions to the technological bodies of the defense establishment and the IDF that few officers in the IDF are privileged to experience [...] and during which the trainees move between the various IDF branches and defense industries, and are exposed to the technological work of each unit in the roles they will fulfill.” This description of the program reflects the inherent connection between the military and the state's security and intelligence bodies and the military industry, since as part of their military training, the soldier-students are required to complete a series that includes visits to military industry companies.

Also during the academic breaks, the soldier-students undergo basic training and subsequently an officers' course, so that they complete the military-academic training track at the rank of lieutenant. During their studies, program participants hold the status of “deferred service,” even though they have, in practice, already enlisted and begun their military training, and the military may draft them for compulsory or reserve service at any given time. Upon completing their studies, the university-graduate-soldiers begin their compulsory service period, which lasts 32 months, after which they continue with 36 months of career service, similar to other graduates of the academic reserve track. Program trainees and graduates are referred to as “*Psagotnikim*.”

The program offers soldier-students two academic tracks – one, existing since 1990, is a four-year combined bachelor's degree in electrical engineering and physics, which they study at the Technion or Tel Aviv University; The second, established in 2007, is a four-year bachelor's degree in software engineering and a non-thesis master's degree in computer science, which they study at the Technion or Ben-Gurion University. The program also guarantees its trainees assured eligibility for student housing at the Technion, Tel Aviv University, and Ben-Gurion University. This is in contrast to the criteria for regular students, whose eligibility for student housing is based on accumulating points, based on socio-economic status, the distance of the academic institution from home, and other parameters.

In response to the Freedom of Information request we submitted to the Ministry of Defense, for the years 2019-2023, no specific agreements relating to the Psagot program at the academic institutions where it operates were listed. It is likely that the financial agreements related to the program are covered under other agreements or titles. Nonetheless, it is worth

⁶⁴ [“Psagot Program”](#), *Mitgaisim*, Israel Defense Forces, January 24, 2023 (in Hebrew).

noting high-value agreements between the Ministry of Defense and these institutions, some of which may reflect the financial compensation that these universities receive for their cooperation with the Ministry of Defense in managing the Psagot program. The first agreement signed by the Ministry of Defense with Ben-Gurion University during the period for which information was received covers the years 2019–2022 and is categorized under the heading “Academic Studies” for the “Regular-Permanent” group, valued at ILS 18,155,663; another agreement, for the years 2022–2025, is categorized under the heading “Bachelor’s Degree Studies” and is also intended for the “Regular-Permanent” group, valued at ILS 15,742,665; and a third agreement, for the years 2022–2026, for “Academic Studies” for the “Regular-Permanent” group, valued at ILS 1,836,480.⁶⁵

The first agreement signed by the Ministry of Defense with the Technion for the same period covers the years 2021–2026 and is listed under the heading “Bachelor’s Studies in Mapping and Geoinformatics” for the “Regular-Permanent” group, valued at ILS 2,699,991.86; another agreement, for a single year (2022–2023) under the heading “Academic Studies” for “Students [or pupils]”, valued at ILS 598,720.92.⁶⁶ Other agreements between the Technion and the Ministry of Defense listed in the response relate to the “Atidim” program.

Between Tel Aviv University and the Ministry of Defense exists one agreement that may reflect cooperation regarding the Psagot program, valid for the years 2022–2025, under the heading “Bachelor’s Studies” for the “Regular-Permanent” group, and valued at ILS 2,221,721.60. Similar to other military units and military-academic programs, and particularly Academic Reserve programs, in the Psagot program the recruitment and marketing process to youth begins already in schools, as can be seen in the following advertisement published on the program’s Facebook page in 2021:

⁶⁵ *Translator’s note:* In their response to our query, the Ministry of Defense provided an appendix listing agreements with academic institutions. The data was organized into columns specifying the academic institution, period of agreement, objective, financial value, and the target population. The “population” section categorized beneficiaries into several major groups: compulsory and career service (active duty soldiers), pre-atuda (pre-academic tracks), atuda (Academic Reserve), and students (which may refer to either university students or school pupils).

⁶⁶ In Hebrew, the word תלמידים (*Talmidim*), pupils, is interchangeable from “students”, thus it is possible that this refers to high school students, and the reference is to one of the youth programs of the Future Scientists Center.

בואו לקחת חלק ביוזמה:
**חשיפת תכנית פסגות
 לבתי ספר**



מחזור ימי בשיתוף עם מנהלות פסגות מציגים
 יוזמה חדשה שתעזור להרחיב את
 משפחת פסגות ולמשוך קהל
 חדש, מוכשר וחזק

מה בתכנית?
 חניכים ובוגרים משתתפים פעולה
 ומעבירים הרצאה לתלמידי התיכון
 כשאופה - תרצו בתיכון שלכם!
 החומר מובנה, כל שתצטרפו לעשות
 הוא ללמוד את הטקסט ולהגיע
 (כמובן, יהיה מקום לאלטרנטיב)

תמיד רציתם לחזור
 לתיכון ולדבר על
 מסלול חייכם באווירה?
 להשפיע ולהשאר
 חותם על דור העתיד?
 אז זו ההזדמנות שלכם!

נשמע לכם טוב? השאירו פרטים בטופס וניצור איחוד קשר בהקדם!
 בנוסף, נקיים מפגש הבנה ייעודי וקצר ובו נציג את ההרצאה והפרטים המלאים של התכנית

Image text: *Join the Initiative: Introducing the Psagot Program to Schools*

Have you always wanted to go back to your high school and talk proudly about the path your life has taken?

To make an impact and leave a mark on the next generation?

Here's your chance!

Class 19, in collaboration with the Psagot Directorate, presents a new initiative to help expand the Psagot family and attract a new, talented, and strong audience.

What's in the program?

- Current participants and alumni collaborate to give a lecture to high school students.*
- Ideally - you'll bring it to your own high school!*
- The material is structured; all you need to do is learn the text and show up!"*

Advertisement inviting current participants and alumni of the "Psagot" program to take part in recruitment efforts for the program. From the [program's Facebook page](#), 2021.

ARAZIM PROGRAM

Academic Institutions: Tel Aviv University | Military Partners: The Academic Reserve, Military Intelligence Corps, and C4I Corps

Arazim is a military-academic program of the Military Intelligence Directorate and the C4I Corps. On Meitav unit's website, the program is described as a "prestigious and selective academic reserve track in the fields of mathematical-technological research, in which participants study for a two-year dual-major bachelor's degree in mathematics and computer science at Tel Aviv University."⁶⁷ The program's own website similarly describes it as a "prestigious and selective track", which was "designed to train leaders for the technological-mathematical research areas in the Intelligence Corps and the Cyber Defense Division."⁶⁸

While for regular students, completing a bachelor's degree in these departments usually takes a minimum of three years, Tel Aviv University adapted the program to meet military requirements, so that soldier-students complete their academic degree within only two years of study. Prospective program participants who have already completed a bachelor's degree during high school enlist in the Arazim 2 program, in which they complete a master's degree in mathematics or computer science in just one year. Per the program's website, "the degree is specially tailored to the Arazim program in terms

⁶⁷ "Shchakim-Arazim Track", *Mitgaisim*, Israel Defense Forces (in Hebrew).

⁶⁸ See the [Arazim Program](#) website (in Hebrew).

of course sequence and elective courses, in order to drive students toward excellence in future military roles, right from the start of the program.” In other words, Tel Aviv University tailors the degree specifically to the needs of the military, with the emphasis on excellence in military roles rather than on academic training.

In parallel with their academic studies, the soldier-students undergo military activities and workshops that include “command and leadership content aimed at shaping their future identity as commanders.” During the summer months between their two years of study, the soldier-students undergo military and intelligence training, which includes basic training and courses in military-intelligence professions. Upon the completion of their academic studies, the cadets officially enlist and undergo an officers’ course, finishing at the rank of lieutenant. At the same time, the fresh military-university graduates undergo military training in research and cyber fields lasting between three to five months, depending on the military role to which they were assigned, along with other military-academic “selected tracks”, covered later in the report: Talpiot, Psagot, Academization, *Ga’ash*, and ARAM [a non-academic military track in the Military Intelligence Directorate].

The soldiers serve a compulsory service of two years and eight months and then continue for three years of career service. They carry out their military service at AMAN [the Military Intelligence Directorate] bases. Although their compulsory military service officially begins only after their academic studies, the recruitment and enlistment process begins much earlier – the military signs prospective cadets to a binding and draconian contract at age 16-17, then officially enlists and conscripts them before the start of their academic studies, continuing their military training throughout their studies. On the program’s page on the Meitav Unit website, under the heading “What does the role give me?”, two benefits are listed: “professional experience for civilian life” and “a degree.”⁶⁹

The program’s website lists additional advantages for prospective soldier-students:

The School of Computer Science at Tel Aviv University is ranked every year among the top institutions in the Shanghai global ranking [The Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU)]. It hosts research groups in a variety of fields that operate in close collaboration with Google, Microsoft, IBM, Cisco, Intel, Check-Point, and other companies. The groundbreaking research conducted at Tel Aviv University pushes the boundaries of what is possible and shapes the future.

⁶⁹ See note 67 above.

This clarifies another aspect of the cooperation between the military and academia: the military knows that for many teenagers, especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, the possibility of an academic degree fully funded by the military is appealing, as is the possibility of completing it immediately after high school, instead of enlisting directly into the military. Additionally, the “professional experience for civilian life” promised by the program is also likely intended to signal to youth that serving in the military intelligence unit through the program will increase their chances of entering the military and technological industry after completing their military service.

BRAKIM / BRAKIM AND MATERIALS (*BRAKIM VEHOMARIM*) PROGRAM

Academic Institutions: The Technion – Israel Institute of Technology and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev | Military Partners: The Academic Reserve and the Israeli Intelligence Corps

The *Brakim* program is run by the Technological Unit of the Military Intelligence Corps and is described by the military as “the IDF’s development commando.” As part of the program, participants study mechanical engineering within the military’s Academic Reserve framework. The program offers two study tracks: the first, Brakim, founded in 2001, where soldier-students pursue a bachelor’s and master’s degree with a thesis in mechanical engineering at the Technion; the second, Brakim and Materials, established in 2012, offers soldier-students a dual bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering and materials engineering at Ben-Gurion University.

The Technion’s website describes the program as “training outstanding students with technological curiosity who aspire to advance in the fields of research and development. The track includes both academic and military training, which have been carefully adapted to focus on research and development fields that are of interest to the IDF, which constitutes the spearhead of the security establishment. Graduates of the program serve as technological leaders in the IDF.”

During their academic studies, soldier-students receive personal guidance from the Head of the Brakim Track in the School of Mechanical Engineering at the Technion, and at Ben-Gurion University from the Head of the Mechanical Engineering Department. Such guidance is not offered to regular students at these institutions. The 2024 Academic Reserve brochure states that the Brakim and Materials military-academic program was “specially designed by Ben-Gurion University” in accordance with the needs of the military.

In the fourth semester of their academic studies, soldier-students at the program undergo “a series of enrichment activities, exposing them to the IDF’s technological units as well as an introduction to the fields of R&D in the IDF, in the defense industries, and in the leading companies in Israel.” As part of these “enrichment activities,” the soldier-students undergo a tour of corps where they are exposed to the work of various units in the military, the Ministry of Defense, and government-owned arms companies, including Rafael, the Technology and Maintenance Corps, the Air Force, the Intelligence Corps, and the Navy. During their first academic summer break, the soldier-students undergo four weeks of basic training. During the summer break at the end of the second academic year, they undergo an officers’ course. During the fifth semester of studies, the officer-students are assigned to their military roles, approximately a year and a half before their “return to service in the IDF.” Upon completing their academic studies, the officers are assigned to key positions in the military and security R&D units and serve an extended term of 5 years and 8 months, of which two years and eight months as compulsory service soldiers and three years as career service officers. In this program as well, the cadets receive automatic eligibility for admission to the Technion’s student housing.

The information booklet for this program also hints at the program’s benefits for the soldiers’ future careers in the military industry after completing their military service. According to the booklet, “During your years of service as officers and engineers, you will gain professional expertise and extensive experience in R&D processes, project advancement, and team management in the most elite units of the IDF. These will open up a tremendous range of opportunities for you in the leading companies in Israel and worldwide.”

SILON PROGRAM

Academic Institutions: The Technion–Israel Institute of Technology | Military Partners: The Academic Reserve and the Air Force

The *Silon* program is an Israeli Air Force program within the military’s Academic Reserve framework. As part of the program, soldier-students pursue a bachelor’s degree in aerospace engineering and a master’s degree in either aerospace engineering (MSc), autonomous systems (MSc), or systems engineering (ME) at the Technion. According to the Academic Reserve information booklet, the program “trains graduates of the IDF’s development commando unit to become leaders in R&D divisions of the Air Force and other special units of the IDF and the security establishment.” The booklet further details career development paths available to soldier-students after completing their studies: “Graduates of the program engage in developing advanced weapons systems, integrating missiles into fighter aircrafts, conducting flight tests, carrying out

UAV development projects and advanced munitions work, as well as a wide variety of additional activities.”⁷⁰

Similar to soldier-students in other military-academic programs, Silon cadets enlist before the start of their academic studies and undergo most of their military training during their academic studies. During summer breaks, they complete basic training, preparation for the officers’ course, and the officers’ course itself; an orientation series with various IDF branches, with an emphasis on technological and aeronautical engineering topics, which includes visits to weapons R&D units and live demonstrations of combat systems and technological equipment during training and military exercises of various army units; and finally, an “enrichment” series in a range of private and military-run arms industries, with an emphasis on technological topics relevant to both the civilian market and the military industry. Once again, this reveals the close connection between the military and the “civilian” military-industrial sector: soldier-students are sent, during their military-academic training, on tour of military-industry companies to become familiar with the ways these companies support the development of weapons for the military, and, likely, to expose them to employment opportunities awaiting them at the end of their military service.

In this program too, soldier-students receive automatic eligibility for residence in the Technion’s student housing. In addition, they are entitled to special conditions during their studies, as “each member of the program is assigned a personal academic advisor from among the faculty, whose role is to accompany the student during their participation in the program” – again, unlike conditions available to regular students. After completing the mandatory academic courses, soldier-students are granted full academic freedom in choosing courses from other faculties. Upon completing their academic studies, graduates proceed to an extended military service of five years and eight months, consisting of two years and eight months of compulsory service and three years of career service.

The Technion’s program webpage states that the program “was developed in collaboration with the IDF’s Academic Reserve, for academic reserve students, and includes academic and military training as well as financial support from the military.” Here, the academic institution admits, and even takes pride, in the fact that it plays an active role in developing a military-academic program, whose explicit purpose is to train soldiers for positions in the research and development of lethal weapons.⁷¹

⁷⁰ “[Silon Program](#)”, *Mitgaisim*, Israel Defense Forces, December 29, 2016 (in Hebrew).

⁷¹ See the [program page](#) on the Technion’s Faculty of Aerospace Engineering website (in Hebrew).

Each year, a youth recruitment conference for the two military-academic programs Brakim and Silon is held on the Technion campus.⁷² So, in addition to the Technion's involvement in the military-academic training of the program's soldiers, the institution also directly assists in recruiting youth into the military and the military establishment for roles in the research and development of weapons.

ALONIM PROGRAM

Academic Institutions: The Technion–Israel Institute of Technology and the University of Haifa | Military Partners: The Academic Reserve and the Military Intelligence Corps

The Alonim program is a program of the Israeli Military Intelligence Corps, within the framework of the Academic Reserve. As part of the program, soldier-students study for a bachelor's and non-thesis master's degree in data and information engineering at the University of Haifa or at the Technion. Per the Academic Reserve booklet, this program too is intended to train soldiers who will serve in R&D roles, as well as in leadership positions, in data and information based military systems. With only minor differences, military training during academic studies in this program is similar to other military-academic programs described above.

The military's interest in collaborating with academic institutions, rather than establishing its own training institutions, is clear in the case of the Alonim program and others: beyond the simple fact that the academic infrastructure already exists, the military seeks the prestige and credibility stamp that traditional academic institutions enjoy, both from the Israeli elite and from international academic institutions. In March 2023, an article about the program was published in the Pazam section on Mako, detailing the collaboration between the Intelligence Corps and the Technion.⁷³ The article states that “the ‘Alonim’ program of the sought-after unit in AMAN [military Intelligence Directorate] and the prestigious academic institution, offer accelerated track for a bachelor's and master's degree in four and a half years [...] The graduating soldiers will contribute to turning the IDF into a global artificial intelligence superpower.”⁷⁴ The article goes on to report that military

⁷² [“Excellence Programs "Brakim" and "Silon" Exposure Conference”](#), Technion Faculty of Aerospace Engineering, January 3, 2017 (in Hebrew).

⁷³ *Translator's note: Pazam* (military for a soldier's seniority or time in service) is a media section targeting teens and young adults (ages 16–25). It works in cooperation with the IDF Spokesperson Unit, the Military Censor, the *BaMahane* magazine (published by the Israeli military), the *Yoter* soldiers' benefits club, and the Adopt a Fighter program. Part of the website of the commercial broadcaster *Keshet*, one of the most popular media outlets in Israel, it serves as an exemplary case of militarism in Israeli mainstream media.

⁷⁴ [“Looking for Marathon Runners at Sprint Pace”: 1st 8200 Cycle Completed in Cooperation with Technion”](#), *Mako*, April 25, 2023 (in Hebrew).

and academic representatives alike participated in the program’s graduation ceremony, including Brigadier General Y’, commander of Unit 8200; the IDF’s data science liaison, Colonel Y; former head of the National Security Council Brigadier General (Res.) Prof Yaakov Nagel; the Technion President Prof. Uri Sivan; and the Dean of the Technion Faculty of Data and Decision Sciences, Prof. Ran Samorodinsky.

GVISHIM PROGRAM

Academic Institutions: The Technion – Israel Institute of Technology | Military Partners: The Academic Reserve

The Gvishim program is a joint program of the Academic Reserve and the Technion, founded in 2019, in which soldier-students study for a bachelor’s and master’s degree (including a thesis) in materials engineering at the Technion. According to the 2024 Academic Reserve information booklet, “Graduates of the program are assigned to unique and fascinating key positions in the R&D divisions of the IDF and the security establishment: the Air Force, the Navy, the Intelligence Corps, the Ground Forces, and units outside the army (Yamal’im) [an acronym for ‘Unit outside the regular force,’ meaning soldiers who serve in the Ministry of Defense].” Similar to the other special reserve programs, the cadets in this program undergo military training in parallel with their academic studies.

Likewise, and similar to the other academic reserve programs, soldier-students in this program are guaranteed housing in the Technion student housing. The Technion also participates in recruiting youth for this program, as seen in an advertisement posted in 2019 on the Facebook page of the Technion’s Faculty of Materials Science and Engineering, and reposted, in various versions, since:



Image text: *Save the date!*
Faculty of Materials Science and Engineering, Meidan Building, Technion Campus, Haifa
Registration on the faculty website.
Exposure conference for the Gvishim Program
A new elite program of the Technion’s Faculty of Materials Science and Engineering and the IDF Academic Reserve.

A recruitment ad for the Gvishim program on the [Facebook page](#) of the Faculty of Materials Science and Engineering at the Technion, 2019.

ACADEMIZATZIA (ACADEMIZATION) TRACK

Academic Institutions: All academic institutions; in particular: Tel Aviv University, the Technion, and Bar-Ilan University (Galim and Bareket programs are part of this track) | **Military Partners:** The Directorate for Academic Technological Manpower–Academization Cell [Academic Reserve Officers Directorate], Military Intelligence Corps, and the C4I Corps

The Academization (Academizatzia) track differs slightly from the other military-academic programs offered by the military, as it is intended for youth who have already completed a bachelor's degree, and sometimes a master's degree, in fields needed by the military, before reaching conscription age. Graduates of the track enlist as academic officers (and are called "Akademizatorim") and are assigned to various roles within the military system. Graduates of the track are also entitled to a one-time grant of ILS 8,500.

As part of the selection process, candidates are given the option to be assigned to the military as academic officers in various roles, even without a master's degree. For those who completed a bachelor's degree in STEM while still in high school, the track offers two "excellence" master's programs—the Galim program and the Bareket program. Soldier-students in these programs are entitled to a full subsidy for their master's degree studies as well as an "excellence" grant of ILS 5,000. The Galim program, in which Academization cadets pursue a master's degree in electrical engineering, takes place at Tel Aviv University, the Technion, or Bar-Ilan University. A news item published at the program's launch in 2018 on the Tel Aviv University Faculty of Engineering website, titled "Top Secret! The Galim Program – The Degree You Can Almost Talk About," described the program as "a new academic collaboration between the Faculty of Engineering at Tel Aviv University and elite intelligence units in the IDF." According to Prof. Shtif, head of the School of Electrical Engineering at Tel Aviv University, "The Galim program adds another important layer in strengthening the relationship between academia and industry, and in this case, the IDF. It is about leveraging the potential in connecting exceptionally high-quality youth with the needs of the IDF's intelligence units. This was the idea behind a very condensed master's degree (three semesters) during which students take many courses and complete a final project."⁷⁵

In the Bareket program, administered by the Academic Reserve Officers Unit in collaboration with the Intelligence Corps and the C4I Corps, Academization cadets study for a master's degree in data engineering at the Technion or Bar-Ilan University. According to Dr. Gila Molcho, described as the coordinator of Data Science at the Davidson Faculty of Industrial

⁷⁵ ["Top Secret! Galim Program – The Degree You Can Almost Talk About"](#), Tel Aviv University Faculty of Engineering, August 7, 2018 (in Hebrew).

Engineering and Management at the Technion, “the program provides a solution for the IDF’s shortage of data personnel who are also developers.”⁷⁶ The trainees of these special programs are considered reserve cadets, with all that this status entails: they complete basic military training during the summer break between the first and second year of studies, and receive professional guidance from the military units and the academic institution where they study. Upon completing their degree, program graduates are assigned to professional roles as academic officers in the technological units of the military and the military establishment. They serve 5 years and 8 months, of which two years and eight months are compulsory service, followed by three additional years of career military service. Program cadets receive personal mentorship and close guidance from the Intelligence Directorate and the Directorate for Academic Technological Manpower in the military, and from the academic institutions where they study.

ODEM PROGRAM

Academic Institutions: The Technion–Israel Institute of Technology | Military Partners: DDR&D | Other Bodies: The Mossad, ISA, Rafael, and additional companies in the military industry

The Odem program is a subsidiary program of the Talpiot program reviewed above. As part of the program, teenagers study in a military boarding high school and subsequently continue to a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering at the Technion, parallel to studies at a military college dedicated to the program. The program recruits youth as young as 14-15 for a duration of 12 years. According to the Ministry of Defense website, “The program is led by the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Education with the support of security agencies, the Technion and the Open University, the local council of Katzrin, and leading companies in the [military] industry.”⁷⁷ The department responsible for the program within the Ministry of Defense is the Directorate of Defense Research & Development.

According to an article published in Haaretz in January 2022, the program is jointly managed by the military, the Mossad, the ISA, private funds and bodies (which the Ministry of Defense refused to disclose), Rafael, and additional military-industry companies.⁷⁸ After completing their military-high school-academic training, graduates serve “six years

⁷⁶ [“New Programs at Technion for Bachelor’s and Master’s Degrees”](#), Technion, October 21, 2018 (in Hebrew).

⁷⁷ [“Fostering the Next Generation”](#), Israel Ministry of Defense (in Hebrew).

⁷⁸ Or Kashti, [“The Mossad and Shin Bet Participate in a Program to Train High School Students to Develop Technological Weapons”](#) *Haaretz*, January 16, 2022 (in Hebrew).

in special dedicated security service roles in various branches.” Program graduates are required to serve in the military’s technology units, the Israel Security Agency, and the Mossad, where they are expected to focus on the development of “autonomous systems.”⁷⁹

Examples of the practical meaning of the amorphous concept of “autonomous systems” in its military context can be found on Rafael’s website. For example, the Carmel product, marketed as “Rafael’s future combat vehicle” and described as a “a transparent cockpit enabling full situational awareness of the combat arena and autonomous capabilities, allowing only two soldiers [sic] to carry out a vast array of military missions,”⁸⁰ or the “SPIKE missile family,” marketed as “an advanced 5th generation electro-optical missile family – already sold to over 39 countries.”⁸¹ These missiles are equipped with a “Fire & Forget” system that enables autonomous operation after launch. It bears repeating: military bodies, military-industry companies, and the Technion recruit children aged 14-15 for these purposes. In a recruitment video for the program, the head of the Israel Security Agency explains to children why they should join: “Ninth-graders who want to lead, who want to make an impact, and who want to contribute, this appeal is for you. The Shin Bet [ISA], the Mossad, the IDF, and the Ministry of Defense are establishing the Odem program for you. We believe that this program will produce the next technological leaders of the security establishment and the State of Israel. They are the ones who will propel Israel forward as a technological superpower. In the ISA, we say, ‘To be ahead at all times and in all places.’ I recommend that at this early stage of your lives, you pave a path for yourselves that combines technological challenge with Zionist fulfillment. Just as it is never too late to learn, it is never too early to lead. The ISA is an organization of excellence. From what I’ve heard, you are too. So we’ll meet in a few years, we’re saving you a spot[!]”⁸²

The program is also marketed by the Ministry of Education⁸³, on a dedicated website and in youth-oriented social media campaigns:

⁷⁹ [Odem Program](#), Israel Ministry of Defense.

⁸⁰ “HaCarmel”, Rafael Advanced Defense Systems (in Hebrew).

⁸¹ “Spike Missile Family”, Rafael Advanced Defense Systems (in Hebrew). Also see the English website page, [“SPIKE ATGM FAMILY”](#).

⁸² [“Odem Program – Head of Shin Bet”](#), YouTube video, Israel Ministry of Defense, January 23, 2022 (In Hebrew).

⁸³ [“Odem Program”](#), Israel Ministry of Education website (in Hebrew).



Image text: *Always dreamt of working in the Mossad or the ISA? The Odem Program is the place for you.*

A recruitment ad for the Odem Program, posted on the Instagram page of the program, 2022.



Image text: *Parents of a 9th grader interested in technology, do you want to see them working in the Mossad or the ISA?*

A recruitment ad for the Odem Program, posted on the Instagram page of the program, 2022.



Image text: *9th grader interested in technology? The ISA is looking for you!*

A recruitment ad for the Odem Program, posted on the Instagram page of the program, 2021. The post's caption reads: "Join the Odem Program, which will set you up with a groundbreaking high-school education, a degree from the Technion, and a prestigious position in the military."



Image text: *Odem program: a unique high school, a degree from the Technion, and a key position in the military.*

A recruitment ad for the Odem Program, posted on the Facebook page of the program, 2022. In the post's caption, a trainee in the program is quoted: "In regular school, I couldn't manage to make friends... In the future, with the knowledge and tools I'll gain in the program, I see myself taking part in designing and developing weapons... for the State of Israel."

Per an article published in the newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth in December 2021, the program's goal is "to bring the youth of the social and geographic periphery into elite technological [military] units."⁸⁴ This statement of intent clearly reflects the priorities of a militaristic society – instead of investing in education and welfare infrastructure for disadvantaged groups, or allocating additional resources to reduce inequality between them and other groups, the state invests vast sums in a military program aimed at recruiting children aged 14-15 to train them for roles in the research and development of weapons, in cooperation with military-industry companies and the military establishment.

The final paragraph of the article concisely summarizes the objectives of this program and other military-academic programs: "Upon completion of the training, graduates will be assigned to key roles in the core and technological units of the IDF, the Mossad, and the Shin Bet [ISA]—units whose many alumni occupy senior positions in the security establishment, in academia, and the high-tech industry." This objective directly serves the military–academic–industrial complex.

CONCLUSION

This sub-section mapped and reviewed nine military-academic 'elite' programs, all within the framework of the Academic Reserve, except for the Talpiot and Odem programs, which are managed by the DDR&D and other bodies. This review shows that some of these programs train participants for roles in weapons R&D and for intelligence and espionage positions in the military. Additionally, some of these programs grant soldiers automatic eligibility for student housing, often at the expense of regular students who must meet certain criteria for eligibility. The most severe of all is the Odem program, which openly recruits children for a period of 12 years to train them as weapons developers.

OTHER PROGRAMS

The purpose of this sub-section is to provide a concise overview of several other military-academic programs that are not part of the military's Academic Reserve system, and to take an in-depth look at two additional "elite" programs – the Erez program of the Ground Forces Command, expected to begin operating at Tel Aviv University in 2024,⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Yossi Yehoshua, "[Talpiot in Katzrin](#)", *Ynet*, December 26, 2021 (in Hebrew).

⁸⁵ *Translator's Note:* The Erez military-academic program began operating at Tel Aviv University in the 2024–2025 academic year.

and the Havatzalot program of the Intelligence Corps, which operated at the University of Haifa from 2005 to 2019, and then transferred to the Hebrew University, where it continues to operate.

There are several other military-academic programs that are not part of the Academic Reserve system, among them seven military-academic study programs that operate within the framework of the Military Colleges Directorate which was established in 2018 at the University of Haifa after it won a tender from the Ministry of Defense. The purpose of the directorate is “to serve as a framework for granting academic degrees to the cadets of the IDF’s prestigious military colleges” – the National Security College [MABAL], the Command and Staff College [PUM Alon], and Tactical Command College [Maltak]. According to the Directorate’s page on the University of Haifa’s website, “participants in the programs, who are drawn from all senior command ranks of the IDF, senior officials in the security establishment, and various government ministries, pursue academic degrees in parallel with their military training.”

The military-academic college offers, as mentioned, seven academic study programs: five bachelor’s degree programs in Multidisciplinary Studies, Economics, Communication/Israel Studies, Political Science, and Human Development and Counseling; and two master’s degree programs in the School of Political Science with dedicated specialization tracks.⁸⁶

In a press release issued by the Ministry of Defense after the University of Haifa won the tender, it was stated that the tender “will allow for a comprehensive and holistic view of the academic institution and all of its academic and commander training programs, and will lead to resource efficiency and the consolidation of academic work as well as enhancement of military research, which will now be concentrated within a single academic institution. These are the flagship programs for the training of commanders in the IDF from the junior officer to the senior officer.” In a corresponding announcement by the University of Haifa, it was stated that the new programs will operate in an “extensive academic system that includes dozens of faculty members from across the university as well as external content experts, aimed at offering optimal training for future generations of IDF commanders.” The president of the University of Haifa also hastened to boast about the new collaboration, and told the press that “winning the tender defines the University of Haifa as responsible for the academic training of the core command of the IDF for the coming years. We are proud to open our doors to the IDF and to be the academic home of the security forces. These precious people work day and night for the

⁸⁶ [“Military Colleges Administration”](#), University of Haifa (in Hebrew).

security of the State of Israel, and we will provide them with educational content of the highest level.”⁸⁷

Other military-academic training programs include that of Air Force flight-course cadets, who study for a bachelor’s degree at Ben-Gurion University during their military training; the GAMLA program of the Military Intelligence Directorate, in which outstanding officers from the corps study for a bachelor’s degree at the Hebrew University;⁸⁸ and the Ofek Forum for Engagement and Influence on Security and Society, within which military personnel (both conscripts and career personnel) study for a bachelor’s degree at Reichman University. As part of the program, the university offers a “Government Bachelor’s Leadership Discount – [for] IDF Students,” in which the university grants a 25% tuition discount “to officers/commanders who attend an academic program during their military service, and who have demonstrated leadership abilities.”⁸⁹ This tuition discount joins many other discounts that military personnel receive, compared with the prices that the rest of the population is required to pay.

NAVAL OFFICERS’ COURSE

Academic Institutions: University of Haifa | Military Partners: Israeli Navy

The Naval Officers’ Course is a combat-officers course for naval officers, during which its cadets undergo training for roles such as weapons officers, C.N.C. [command, navigation, and communications] officers, mechanics, and electronics officers on Israeli Navy missile boats and submarines, and for command of the corps’ routine security vessels. The course lasts two years and four months, during which the soldier-students undergo military training while also studying for an academic degree in political science at the University of Haifa. After completing their training, the officers are required to continue to five years of career service. The “academic phase” of the program lasts only eight months. The studies take place both at the university and at the Haifa naval base.⁹⁰ According to professors and students from the University of Haifa with whom we spoke, during their time at the university, the cadets carry M16 rifles while on campus.

⁸⁷ Omri Zarakhovitz, [“Haifa Won the Military Colleges Tender: 10 Million Shekels in the Year”](#), *Globes*, June 13, 2018 (in Hebrew).

⁸⁸ Tomi Shtokman, [“The New Program That Develops Intelligence Personnel. Entry for Top Performers Only”](#), Intelligence Directorate, Israel Defense Forces, October 15, 2018 (in Hebrew).

⁸⁹ [“Ofek Forum”](#), Reichman University (in Hebrew). See also the [list of recent Dean’s Award recipients](#) at Reichman University, along with explanations for their selection (in English).

⁹⁰ [“Naval Officers Course”](#), Mitgaisim, Israel Defense Forces, July 11, 2016 (in Hebrew).

A LOOK TO THE FUTURE: THE CASE OF THE EREZ PROGRAM

Academic Institutions: Tel Aviv University | Military Partners: IDF Ground Forces

The *Erez* program is a new military-academic program that is expected to begin operating in the 2024/25 academic year at Tel Aviv University.⁹¹ As described in the public tender distributed by the Ministry of Defense to academic institutions the program is “a new elite track for combat command.” The program’s purpose is to train commanders in the army’s combat field units during their compulsory service. The soldier-combat-commander-students in the program are expected to undergo a unique 3-year training track, which combines military training and academic studies, and then continue to a mandatory career service of an additional four years as combat officers. Each cohort is expected to include between 80 and 100 soldiers from the Ground Forces, uniformed and armed, studying alongside ordinary students. Moreover, according to the tender, the “unique military and academic training” that the cadets undergo will “transform them from civilians into elite fighters, Ground Forces commanders, combat officers, and educated academics.”

The program’s academic studies will run alongside the military training track and will take place before the commanders enter the military’s officer training course. The vision of the program, as presented in the tender, is to be the “incubator for developing the future commanders of the IDF and the leaders of Israeli society.” According to an article published in *TheMarker* in July 2023, a Hebrew-language business daily, the collaboration between the Ministry of Defense and Tel Aviv University is expected to bring the university approximately ILS 15,000,000 for the training of the program’s first three cohorts.⁹²

The track is expected to include, among other elements, a preparatory period for studies, three years of undergraduate studies, residence in university student housing and catering services on campus. During the program’s first three months, the cadets will undergo a “basic preparation” period that includes a preparatory course for Israel’s psychometric university entrance exam, group-building activities, physical training, introductory academic courses, and additional training sessions. Afterwards, the cadets will enlist in a combat track, spending a year at the IDF’s infantry brigade training bases, where they will be trained as commando fighters. At the end of this period, the participants are expected to complete a command course at the IDF Infantry School, followed by four semesters of combined academic and military training at Tel Aviv University.

⁹¹ *Translator’s Note:* The Erez military-academic program began operating at Tel Aviv University in the 2024–2025 academic year.

⁹² Lior Detal, “[Commanders in the Ground Forces Will Study for a Degree at Tel Aviv University Already During Compulsory Service](#)”, *TheMarker*, July 5, 2023 (in Hebrew).

As part of their academic track at the university, the soldier-students will study fields aligned with the military's needs, such as "Military and Security," Middle Eastern and Islamic studies, a "Digital Sciences for High-Tech" track in the Faculty of Engineering, business administration, political science, and geography and environmental studies. The soldier-students will divide their time between academic studies on the Tel Aviv University campus and ongoing combat-military training, which will include "diverse operational and command exercises" through which they "will be trained for command in combat" at "the different training bases of the Ground Forces (armor, engineering, artillery, intelligence, and combat intelligence collection)." In addition, the soldier-students are set to take part in "specialized training modules (for example, cooperation with foreign armies)," in parallel with their academic studies. After finishing their studies, the soldier-students will attend the IDF's Combat Officers Course at *Bahad 1* [Officer Training School].⁹³

Following the combined military and academic training, the combat-officer-university-graduates will be assigned to two roles as platoon commanders and two roles as company commanders in the various combat battalions of the army. The career service of program participants will last four years, making the total length of the track six years and eight months.⁹⁴ The military plans to establish a follow-up program for Erez graduates who seek to advance further in the chain of command, towards positions as battalion and brigade commanders. Later in the *TheMarker* article about the program, the head of the Division for Procurement of Individual and Unit Services in the Directorate of Procurement and Production at the Ministry of Defense, a division responsible for external business contracts with various bodies, including academic institutions, was quoted saying that "the connection between academia and the training of the next generations of Ground Force commanders is a sprout we are planting today, the fruits of which we will reap in the future." In the same article, Prof. Eyal Zisser, Vice-Rector of Tel Aviv University, also expressed pride in the further collaboration with the military: "The new students will integrate into various fields through double-major tracks in social studies, management, sciences, and high-tech. We regard it as another expression of the university's contribution to the resilience and development of the society and the state."

The public tender for the Erez program, spanning 52 pages, offers a glimpse into the military's draconian demands of the academic institutions with which it cooperates, the overt and covert militarization processes that such collaborations promote, and the readiness of Israeli academic institutions to cooperate with the army despite the price

⁹³ ["Erez program"](#), *Mitgaisim*, Israel Defense Forces, December 11, 2023 (in Hebrew).

⁹⁴ Aya Haimovitz, ["Erez Program Launched for the First Time – Out of Thousands, 71 Were Selected to Make History"](#), Ground Forces, September 19, 2023 (in Hebrew).

faculty and students may pay for the deepening militarization of the academic sphere.⁹⁵ A review of selected clauses from the tender shed light on the extent of the cooperation between the military and the academic institutions and its implications for the rest of the academic community.

According to clause 2.3.1:

The Ministry reserves the option to increase the number of cohorts by up to three additional study cycles and to expand the size of each cohort by as much as double (both during the original period and in any of the option periods).

In other words, the university awarded the tender grants the Ministry of Defense the unilateral authority to extend the contract for three additional study cohorts and to double the number of students in the program: from 80-100 to 160-200. In practice, since two cohorts undergo their training simultaneously, this amounts to between 320 and 400 soldiers at the university at any given time. The implication is a significant increase in soldiers wearing military uniforms on campus, potentially required to carry weapons. Alongside the accelerated militarization that Tel Aviv University accepts under this clause, the question of infrastructure and manpower also arise. Will the university appoint additional lecturers and teaching assistants, or will mass courses be created that undermine the quality of instruction for the students and the employment conditions of the faculty?

According to clause 2.3.4:

The exact start date of each cohort, the hours of instruction, and other technical details related to its operation will be coordinated directly between the Ministry/IDF and the awarded provider.

Under this clause, all technical details related to the academic studies of the program's soldier-students will be coordinated between the university and the Ministry of Defense or military, putting them effectively under the authority of these bodies.

The tender further specifies a timetable that the academic institution is required to meet prior to and throughout the program. Specifically, it calls for an “**appointment of functionaries**. Assignment of an **academic office and an administrative office** on behalf of the **academic institution** to lead and oversee the tender's components [emphases in the original].” It also requires the “presentation of an integrated curriculum for the

⁹⁵ Israel Ministry of Defense, [Public Tender for the Purchase of Bachelor's Degree Studies Erez Program for the Ground Forces](#) (in Hebrew).

‘Erez’ program by the academic office and the preparation of a schedule tailored for the program by the academic office [sic], in cooperation with the head of the ‘Erez’ program or a representative appointed on their behalf [emphases in the original].” This section, together with clause 6.6, shows the scope of the university’s obligations. Under that clause, the provider must set up dedicated undergraduate classes for the program’s soldiers and establish academic and administrative offices to support the program closely. It becomes clear that the institution awarded the tender is required to cooperate fully with the military authorities managing the program on behalf of the army. This cooperation extends to curriculum design, requiring the university to offer dedicated classes and set up dedicated offices for the authorities or the program itself. In other words, the university and other academic institutions cannot claim they merely “host” programs combining academic study and military training within existing academic infrastructure, since they are creating dedicated infrastructure for them.

Clause 5, which concerns confidentiality, requires the academic institution and its employees to treat as confidential any intelligence related to the program. The clause does not specify what is included in “any intelligence,” but it is precisely this ambiguity that is troubling. Furthermore, the university is required to provide a security officer on behalf of the military with “responses to questions and demands on issues concerning operation security, if required.” The meaning of this clause is vague and may indicate not only intervention in the university’s campus security arrangements but also a demand for information about students and faculty, or even their surveillance.

In addition, according to clause 6.5, the university is obligated to allow the students in the program to enter the institution with army-issued weapons. This means that Tel Aviv University undertakes to allow 80 to 200 additional uniformed soldiers to carry weapons on campus in the first cohort alone, a number that may rise to 400 when two cohorts of the program study simultaneously. This therefore represents a massive increase in the presence of weapons and military uniforms in the academic space of Tel Aviv University, and as noted in relation to clause 2.3.1, is a part of an accelerated militarization of the academic sphere.

Later in the document, under the heading “State of Emergency, War, and Force Majeure,” three additional clauses appear that the university is required to accept:

10. Chapter Seven – State of Emergency, War, and Force Majeure [emphases in the original]

- 10.1. In the event of a deterioration of the security situation (for example, a military operation, war, “special situation on the home front” and “attack situation” as defined in the Civil Defense Law, 1951) and the temporary

suspension of studies, the event will be considered a force majeure and will not constitute a breach of the contract by the contracting authority (Israel Ministry of Defense).

10.2. The military authority, in consultation with the academic office on behalf of the awarded academic institution, may order the suspension of studies during a state of alert, war, or other operational activity that prevents reasonable conduct of studies. For the avoidance of doubt - the final decision-making authority on this matter rests with the designated military authority, at its sole discretion.

10.3. Once the impediment to the conduct of regular studies has ended, regular studies shall be resumed as soon as possible and shall continue until the end of all study programs. Lectures, practice sessions, examinations, and completion of missed coursework shall be scheduled in ongoing coordination.

The university's agreement to a clause stipulating that war shall be considered "force majeure" is completely absurd and leaves the possibility of unilaterally suspending the soldiers' studies in the hands of the Ministry of Defense.

Another clause that deserves attention is clause 13, in which the Ministry of Defense seeks to restrict the faculty's freedom of expression at the university:

Expression of Academic Staff [emphases in the original]

The academic institution undertakes to ensure that the academic staff refrains from offensive statements towards IDF soldiers studying at the institution, whether such statements concern their military service in the IDF or whether they concern the fact that they are uniformed. This obligation is essential.

The equivocal phrase "offensive statements" establishes that it is the academic institution's duty to ensure that the academic staff fully align themselves with the positions of the military and the Ministry of Defense and refrains from expressing any criticism whatsoever of military service or the wearing of uniforms. It is clear that in this way the military may interpret this provision expansively, extending far beyond those subjects, which in themselves deserve open discussion and critical debate. Therefore, the obligation is meant to intimidate the academic staff and silence any criticism that they may have regarding the military presence in academia and the army's actions outside of it.

In addition, according to the tender's terms, and similar to other military-academic programs reviewed above, the academic institution must provide student housing for the program's soldiers, at the expense of regular students [emphases in the original]:

- 2.23. **“Civilian facility”** – a facility rented by the IDF and used for housing and studies as part of the ‘Erez’ program.
- 2.24. **“Program compound”** – infrastructures designated for the ‘Erez’ program, located within the academic institution's campus or adjacent to it and near the student housing. Infrastructures that are intended for managing the unit's routine during their studies toward the degree.
- 2.25. **“Residential Compound”** (“Student Housing”) - the housing of the trainees and staff of the ‘Erez’ program during the academic studies period, located in the campus of the academic institution or nearby, within a short walking distance.

From these clauses, and in particular from the phrase “infrastructures intended for managing the unit's routine during the degree studies,” it is evident that the demand for soldiers' accommodation on campus amounts in practice to either converting existing student housing within or near the university grounds into a military base or constructing such a base from scratch. This has already been done, among other examples, in the Intelligence Corps' Havatzalot program, first at the University of Haifa and later at the Hebrew University.

The tender specifies that the “program's compound” must meet the following conditions:

- 9.1. The students in the program shall reside in **student housing provided by the awarded institution or in a military base** [emphases in the original] depending on the availability and proximity of a suitable base to the awarded institution.

In addition, in light of the program's characteristics—combining military training alongside academic studies, as well as the need to maintain operational readiness at times as a trained combat entity, the military command staff is required to remain in close proximity to the program's trainees during the academic studies period.

This clause underscores once again that the military's intention is, in effect, to establish a military base on the grounds of the university or in the nearby student housing, since the Ministry of Defense emphasizes the need to “maintain operational readiness at times as a trained combat entity,” which also requires the military command staff to reside in the program's designated compound.

In addition, according to clause 2.15 of the tender, the awarded academic institution must grant academic exemption on the basis of studies for “non-academic army and security courses” – meaning, the military training that the soldier-students undergo as part of the program. According to clause 2.16, these courses shall be delivered by “expert military staff,” and specifically “expert teaching staff operating on behalf of the IDF, delivering the non-academic ‘army and security’ courses with the approval and under the guidance and supervision of the academic institution.” For the military courses preceding the degree, the academic institution and the Council for Higher Education will recognize 18 academic credits for the soldier-students, along with an additional 8 credits for the officer training course taken toward the end of their degree studies. This therefore amounts to more than one-fifth of the total academic credits required for a bachelor’s degree, granted for military training that is completely devoid of any connection to the academic programs normally recognized by the Council for Higher Education. Moreover, according to clause 2.8.9, “in light of the intensity of the program and its spread over short periods, the academic staff must adjust to grading exams and publishing grades within timelines shorter than those customary in academic institutions. In addition, the academic institution undertakes to provide dedicated reinforcement sessions for the soldier-students enrolled in the program.”

These clauses raise a number of difficult questions for Tel Aviv University and the Council for Higher Education: Will the university be prepared to accept any condition set by the Ministry of Defense simply in order to secure a military contract that will provide it with substantial funds? Will the university and the Council for Higher Education agree to such far-reaching changes in curricula, in faculty employment terms, and in the degree eligibility requirements, such that a significant share of the academic credits would no longer be granted for study at an academic institution at all, but instead in military facilities and by military staff? Could there be any greater devaluation of the academic degrees granted by the university and approved by the Council for Higher Education? And finally, why are the university and the Council for Higher Education willing to so openly discriminate against students in regular academic programs who are required to meet all the standard conditions set by them in order to qualify for an academic degree, while undermining the value of the very degrees they confer? And why do the program’s soldiers receive additional special academic benefits, such as dedicated tutoring sessions?

Additional far-reaching clauses require the university to hold academic courses in military facilities, as determined by the military’s needs, and to provide the military with details about the academic staff. According to clause 8.4.1, the academic institution must inform the head of the Erez program on the academic staff chosen to teach the soldiers enrolled in the program. If the military’s demands in these clauses were accepted by Tel Aviv University, then this would mean that university lecturers will be required to teach in military facilities, and that the head of the Erez program, Reserve Brigadier General

Yuval Bazak, will be informed on the identity of the academic staff assigned to the program. These two clauses raise many questions, among them: Will faculty members be able to refuse to teach in military facilities? Will the military conduct security clearance investigations of the academic staff? Will faculty members be able to refuse to have their personal details handed over to the military? And will the university, from the outset, employ only faculty members it believes the military will approve, avoiding the hiring of, for example, Palestinian lecturers or those who hold left-wing political views?

According to clause 7.6 of the tender, a joint steering committee will be established by the academic institution and the military. It will include the rector of the academic institution or the dean of the faculty, members of the dedicated academic office to be established for the program, representatives of the elective departments in the various study tracks, and representatives from the military – the head of the program and other officials on his behalf. The committee's roles will include ongoing oversight of the program's management and implementation. They will receive reports regarding the soldiers studying in the program, and supervise the quality of teaching and the treatment of students. According to clause 9.10.4, "the head of the Erez program, or his authorized representative, will be entitled to speak with each trainee's instructors regarding his achievements and the instructor's impression of the trainee." In other words, the academic teaching staff will be required to answer not only to the students themselves, the academic administrative staff, or other officials at the institution, but also to the head of the Erez program – that is, to an army officer. This clause constitutes a grave breach of the customary confidentiality between faculty and students, and obliges academic staff, who are not military personnel, to provide detailed reports to an army officer.

These clauses are incompatible with the principle of academic freedom, especially when senior university officials, department representatives, and other faculty members are required to regularly report to military officials. The clauses add to the ones reviewed above and raise concerns about the independence of the university and its academic staff in teaching and research, especially given the constant military oversight. It is also puzzling that the university would agree to have faculty members and senior officials sit on a joint committee with military personnel, overseeing the work of their own colleagues (in the case of department representatives) and their subordinates (in the case of the university rector and the faculty dean).

According to clause 7.7 of the tender, an annual study and research day will be held, focusing on military-security aspects to be determined by the steering committee. The study day will be intended for all cohorts enrolled in the program, for the program's staff, and for additional guests. The academic institution will be obliged to provide an auditorium on campus with a capacity of 350 seats for this purpose. The institution also commits to integrate the program's staff and students into other conferences and

events held at the academic institution. In clause 7.8, under the heading “Summary of Major Events with the Participation of Representatives of the Academic Institution”, the institution commits to holding seven dedicated events for the program each year, attended by representatives of the steering committee, among them the university rector or the faculty dean:

Event Description	Participating Body	Event Timing
Presentation of the degree to the program candidates	Academic administration	During the program's screening phase
Curriculum design	Representatives of the steering committee	Preparation for a new cohort's admission
Exposure of study tracks	Representatives of the steering committee	Timing to be determined jointly
Opening event – 'Academic period'	Representatives of the steering committee	The beginning of the first winter semester
Study and research day	Academic administration	Annually, all program cohorts
'Erez' program steering committee	Representatives of the steering committee	Every six months
Graduation ceremony	Representatives of the steering committee	Completion of the 'Erez' track and conferral of the degree

This clause, together with previous ones regarding the program’s academic-military “steering committee,” raises the question: why do representatives of the academic faculty and senior university officials commit to invest such a substantial portion of their time to managing the military-academic program, and why the university rector, the faculty dean, and the academic departments representatives would attend the “study and research day,” which is devoted entirely to military issues.

According to Clause 9.9.2.2, “priority in borrowing books shall be granted, as well as the ability to borrow books beyond the regular quota, and this is in accordance with the institution’s guidelines.” In other words, even for the use of library services, priority will be given to the program’s soldiers, again in contrast to the conditions afforded to ordinary enrolled students. In addition, as part of the tender conditions, the university is obliged to provide lunch for the soldiers enrolled in the program, and to grant the army the option of extending catering to breakfast and dinner should the soldiers reside in the campus student housing. Entire pages of the tender are devoted to the special menu that the academic institution must provide to the future combat officers. For example,

clause 2.2 of the meal requirements table specifies that the university must provide the soldiers with cottage cheese in every meal, while clause 8 adds a requirement for olives or pickles. But why should the university provide catering services for the military?

According to Dr. Anat Matar, a philosophy lecturer at Tel Aviv University and an activist, the internal process for approving the program at the university was undermined by serious flaws and deliberate concealment:

There are two interesting things here. First, this tender itself and its details; second, and in my view extremely grave, is the way it was deliberately slipped under the radar. Now, these two elements are simply a duplication or a copy of what happened with the ‘Havatzalot’ program at the Hebrew University. I know this from several people I spoke with who were active against the program—they know what they managed to achieve from the administration, which was practically nothing, only what their policy was and mainly that they don’t bring it up for any discussion in the Senate and generally work to calm things down. As for the Senate, from what I understand, it is mandatory to submit changes in study programs for the Senate’s approval. In my opinion, they are required to do so since it is a new study program. In any case, this program was never brought up for any discussion at the Tel Aviv University Senate. What is certainly required is the approval of the Faculty Council for this matter, and that approval has not yet been given.⁹⁶

According to Dr. Matar, most faculty members in the departments where the soldiers were supposed to study were not informed by the university about the existence of the new program, and many only learned of it by chance. At a Humanities’ Faculty Council meeting held about a week before the end of the 2022- 2023 academic year, several faculty members demanded that the Erez program be brought up for discussion after learning that the Ministry of Defense had requested that the Faculty of Humanities serve as the host faculty for the soldiers. After the meeting, the faculty dean asked the faculty members to send her their comments regarding the program’s tender, but the very next day an article appeared in *TheMarker*, an Israeli business daily, announcing that the Ministry of Defense had already signed an agreement with Tel Aviv University to establish the program.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ The statements cited in this section, as well as other quotations from Dr. Matar, were taken from interviews conducted in 2023, prior to Dr. Matar’s retirement.

⁹⁷ Ultimately, the program was put to a closed ballot in the Faculty Council and approved. The Erez program began operating at Tel Aviv University in the 2024–2025 academic year.

This led faculty members to understand that the agreement had already been signed long before, and that all the discussions and requests for comments and feedback were nothing but empty gestures. The faculty members nevertheless insisted on meeting with the dean to discuss the program. During the meeting, it became clear that at an early point the university decided to bid for the tender without prior discussion with the Faculty Council, and had already begun developing the Erez program. It was stated that if, at a later stage, the Faculty of Humanities Council was to reject the program, it would be transferred to the Faculty of Management or the Faculty of Social Sciences.

According to Matar, during the meeting, the dean repeatedly emphasized the importance of hosting the program in the Faculty of Humanities, which, she said, would serve as a “lifeline for our smaller departments. When departments are at risk of closure, you don’t say no to another 80 students a year.” The dean’s remarks further illustrate one of the reasons academic institutions compete for military-academic collaborations, even when they include draconian conditions imposed by the army and the Ministry of Defense: the promise of substantial budgets and a large influx of students.

This also reveals a dilemma facing Israeli civil society more broadly. The state budget allocated to the military and to “security” bodies is among the largest in the world. Therefore, civilian bodies seeking government support are compelled to cooperate with military bodies in order to gain access to even a small portion of these funds. Later in the meeting, the dean and several other faculty members remarked: “the army is everywhere anyway, and the army is part of us, and our children go to the army, and even the university’s Chemistry Department is funded by the defense industries.” These sentences attest to the circular nature of militarization: Its presence in many civilian spheres leads the public to believe that the military’s centrality is necessary, natural, and self-evident. That belief, in turn, enables the military to expand its involvement in additional civilian spheres, which then reinforces the public’s conviction about its importance, status, and values in civilian life.

It remains unknown which of the tender’s clauses were ultimately included in the final agreement between the Ministry of Defense and Tel Aviv University, and it is hard to believe that either the university or the Ministry of Defense will publish it for public review, or even for the university community. Yet even if only some of the clauses reviewed above are eventually implemented, they provide further evidence of the extensive and deep militarization processes that military-academic programs drive within academic institutions.

A LOOK AT THE PAST AND PRESENT: THE CASE OF HAVATZALOT

Academic Institutions: The Hebrew University and the University of Haifa | Military Partners: Israeli Intelligence Corps

The Havatzalot program is described as a “military and academic excellence program aimed at training intelligence officers for core positions in the Intelligence Directorate,” and as “the flagship program of the Intelligence Corps [...] considered as one of the most prestigious tracks in the IDF.”⁹⁸ Approximately 50 conscripts are admitted to the program each year, after successfully passing its seven screening stages. The program’s cadets undergo combat basic training, an officers’ training course, extensive intelligence training, command-leadership training, and additional military training. In parallel, they enroll at the Hebrew University as undergraduate students in a three-year bachelor’s degree program.

The first document describing the program was published as early as 2003 by Eviatar Matania, who at the time headed the Talpiot military-academic program at the DDR&D. In it, Matania concluded that “like every other branch of the IDF, the Intelligence Directorate must also have its own academic program.” Two years later, in the summer of 2005, Matania published an article in the military journal *Ma’arachot*, where he argued that the military must “broaden the horizons of the intelligence officer. The process of globalization in its various forms requires, more than ever before, that the intelligence officer possess a broad interdisciplinary academic education and a diverse professional background, and that he benefit from a range of analytical tools [emphases in the original].”⁹⁹

Further in the article, he writes:

The first conclusion that follows from the need for broad and interdisciplinary intelligence training is that it is no longer sufficient to rely on [military] intelligence researchers who do not possess academic training at least at the level of a bachelor’s degree. This requirement is not unusual. In all professional fields worldwide, an academic degree is increasingly becoming a necessary prerequisite. In this respect, the IDF is no exception, and therefore invests considerable resources to ensure its officers receive an academic education. It does so both through pre-military service programs (such as the Academic Reserve) and through

⁹⁸ “[Havatzalot program](#)”, *Mitgaisim*, Israel Defense Forces.

⁹⁹ E. Matania and Lt. Col. Y., “The Other Within Us—Adapting the Training of the Intelligence Officer to the Current Era.”, *Ma’arachot*, no. 402 (2005): 46–52 (in Hebrew).

training during military service, the first of which was the Talpiot program. The [Air Force] Flight School now integrates academic studies as well, and grants its graduates a bachelor's degree, and the Tactical Command College grants a bachelor's degree to those on track to become company commanders in the Ground Forces. The training of intelligence professionals should also adopt the model of interdisciplinary training conducted within civilian academia. In our view, it is not possible – as certain intelligence personnel have previously suggested – to establish an intelligence academy [...] The academic training of intelligence officers must include two components: a substantive component and an analytical component. The substantive component will cover subjects related to Middle Eastern Studies, Arabic and Islam, international relations, and security studies; whereas the analytical component, equal in scope to the substantive component, will focus on subjects that provide the intelligence analyst with tools of thought, such as advanced mathematics, philosophy, psychology, and economics.¹⁰⁰

In the same summer that the article was published, the Havatzalot program was founded, and its first cohort of soldier-students, the Havtzalonim, as they are called by the military, set out on its way. Similar to other military-academic programs described above, the Havatzalot program combines military and academic training. Before beginning their academic studies, the soldier-students undergo combat basic training. They then begin their academic studies, while simultaneously participating in military courses and a military “navigation series,” an intensive field exercise in land navigation. During the breaks between academic semesters, the soldier-students attend a “military series,” in which they undergo training in the various military units. In the summer break between the first and second academic years, they complete the officers’ training course. They are required to wear uniforms throughout their period of study at the university.

In its first fourteen years, between 2005 and 2019, the program was hosted by the University of Haifa. In March 2019, the Ministry of Defense announced that it had selected the Hebrew University as the new “provider” of the program. In October of that year, it began operating at the Hebrew University’s two main campuses in Jerusalem, Mount Scopus and Givat Ram. The transition was accompanied by significant opposition, both from academic staff at the university and at other institutions, as well as from student groups.^{101 102} Despite the protest and the numerous objections concerning the harm that

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 49–50.

¹⁰¹ Yigal Broner, “[Havatzalot Nightmare at the Hebrew University](#)”, *Haaretz*, April 21, 2019 (in Hebrew).

¹⁰² On Barak and Avner Vishnitzer, “[Not Through Sights: In Defense of the Civil Nature of Middle Eastern Studies in Israel](#)”, *Haaretz*, April 8, 2019 (in Hebrew).
Haaretz, April 14, 2019 (in Hebrew).

the introduction of yet another military program was expected to cause on campus, the Hebrew University refused to heed the concerns of the academic staff and the many students who opposed hosting the program, and it began operating on campus. The opposition stemmed, among other things, from the publication of the tender's scandalous conditions in Haaretz.¹⁰³ The report revealed that the Ministry of Defense had demanded that the Hebrew University install communication systems, computers, and monitoring devices in campus buildings; that the living quarters of the cadets and military staff be located inside the campus; equip the soldiers' quarters with a steel door secured by biometric personal identification, window bars and military security; deploy a network of security cameras at all entrances to the quarters; and station armed guards to provide 24-hour security for all facilities where the cadets stay. The conditions also required handing over to the military personal details of all security and maintenance staff working in the residential and administrative areas; allowing the program's cadets to move around campus in military uniforms and possibly carrying weapons; giving priority for cadets of the same cohort in the program to take their mandatory courses together in one class; providing the program's commander a detailed list of the courses; waiving the traditional confidentiality between lecturers and students by obliging the academic teaching staff to provide the military with information about the soldier-students' academic performance, even before the soldier-students themselves received their grades, while also granting the program commander the right to discuss the cadets' affairs with their lecturers, even without the cadet's knowledge; and obliging university staff to obtain prior authorization in order to be present in the same compound as the soldiers.

According to the military, the tender conditions were approved by the Council for Higher Education, and they were identical to those in place during the 14 years in which the program operated at the University of Haifa. Notably, many of these conditions are identical to those forming the basis of the new tender for the Erez program mentioned above, which is expected to begin operating at Tel Aviv University in the upcoming academic year (2024-2025).

¹⁰³ Yaniv Kovovitz, [“The IDF Will Operate a Program at the Hebrew University, Including a Fenced Base on Campus”](#),



Image text: *Welcome 'Havatzalot' Program*
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem takes pride in leading the prestigious academic program 'Havatzalot' of the Intelligence Corps.

We wish much success and extend a warm welcome to the students of the 'Havatzalot' program who will enter the gates of the university from the upcoming academic year.

The Ministry of Defense and the IDF's selection of the Hebrew University attests to its excellence, leadership training capabilities, and uncompromising academic standards.

Signed:
The Rector of the University
Barak Medina

The President of the University
Asher Cohen

The Vice President and Director General
Yishai Fraenkel.

A large advertisement published by the Hebrew University in Haaretz newspaper, following criticism from students and academics over the university's agreement to operate the Havatzalot program.

In September 2019, just one month before the beginning of the academic year and the official entry of the program into the Hebrew University, with its soldiers, uniforms, and military facilities, the Van Leer Institute, a research center for interdisciplinary studies in Jerusalem, organized a conference titled “Mount Scopus and Intelligence: The Entry of the ‘Havatzalot’ Program into the Hebrew University.” The aim was to provide a platform for the public and academic debate that was underway at the time around the program’s arrival into the university.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Assaf David, director of the “Israel in the Middle East cluster” at the Van Leer Institute and a lecturer at the Hebrew University, shared with the audiences the impressions and thoughts that accompanied him that evening, as well as the military’s refusal to take part in the discussion and defend its position:

I wanted to open this evening’s discussion with a note of caution about the charged and sensitive nature subject. On the one hand, those opposed to military-academic cooperation at various levels of determination. As a rule, the overwhelming majority of opponents come from the left, mainly from the radical left which is a minority within a minority in Israel. On the other side, the overwhelming majority in the country, and a majority in academia, who do not see any problem in military-academic cooperation, and are even involved in such cooperation. And this majority looks with astonishment and incomprehension

at the handful of opponents and protesters. [...] I will address two aspects that usually remain behind the scenes and left unspoken at gatherings of this kind. The first aspect is who speaks here and who does not, and what the implications of that are. And the second aspect, which is the elephant in the room, is politics, or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and even more specifically, the occupation. To make this evening as interesting as possible and to broaden our horizons and perspectives so that no one would leave as they arrived, we asked the army to approve the attendance of the manager of the Havatzalot program, Reserve Brigadier General Moti Dimitstein. We thought that if the army enters academia through open doors, it is not only desirable but also fair that a representative on its behalf, on behalf of the program, would come here, explain its rationale and defend it. The army refused to approve it.¹⁰⁴

Later, Dr. David explained the absence of Palestinian speakers from the discussion:

...it was absurd from the outset to expect an East Jerusalemite, representing a growing population of students at the Hebrew University, to agree to sit on a panel here alongside a military officer and express his position on the program. So we turned to Arab-Palestinian lecturers, Israelis, citizens of Israel, and told them there was a chance they might sit next to a senior army officer on this panel, and after a few attempts, we concluded it was hopeless and gave up on that as well. So we were left with very serious speakers, leading professionals in their fields, but on a wholly Jewish panel, and the absence speaks for itself. This discussion is as charged and sensitive as can be, because the two populations most relevant to it refused to take part.

Dr. David went on to explain what he believed to be the significance of the Havatzalot program at the Hebrew University for Palestinian students and faculty:

The main reason for the refusal is political, that is, the conflict, in other words, the occupation. The Havatzalot program is not a program for training American army officers at Stanford University, nor is it a program for training naval officers at the University of Haifa, or a program for training pilots at Ben-Gurion University, and not even a program for training Talpiot officers at the [Hebrew University's] Givat Ram campus. This is a program for training military intelligence officers at Mount Scopus campus. This is a campus where, with the encouragement of the Hebrew University, a growing population of Palestinians from East Jerusalem,

¹⁰⁴ [“Mount Scopus and the Intelligence: The Entry of the ‘Havatzalot’ Program to the Hebrew University | Opening Remarks”](#), YouTube video, The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, August 28, 2019.

who are not even Israeli citizens but only residents, and even that status hangs by a thread, subject to the whims of the political, municipal, and legal system of the State of Israel and sometimes outright injustices as we saw just this month in Silwan and Wadi Hummus in Sur Baher [...] The Israel Defense Forces is for them the Palestinian Attack Army. The army is not a neutral body in their eyes. The Intelligence Directorate is the one responsible, among other things, for surveillance and investigation of them. And that is even without going into the exercise of violence in practice and the question of whether the very situation of occupation that the army maintains is itself a violent one. So perhaps now it is clearer to all of us why the army is not here and why the Palestinians are not here and how this limits our discussion here this evening.

In remarks read that evening by Dr. Yael Berda of the Hebrew University on behalf of Dr. Hila Dayan, a lecturer at University College in Amsterdam who researches the sociology of the Israeli regime and society and is one of the founders of Academia for Equality, Dr. Dayan shed light on other aspects of the military-academic cooperation:

In the context of the Havatzalot program it was said that the university is providing a service to society. So, the first point I want to dwell on is how we view the social role of the university. I want to understand what kind of social service is being discussed here. Prestigious military programs like Havatzalot, over which universities compete, draw the most advantaged populations in Israel, whose socioeconomic background is high and whose access to higher education is in any case not in doubt. So what is “social” about the fact that these advantaged populations receive preferential treatment from the university, such as priority in course registration, student housing on campus, etc.? This is a policy of allocating public resources to reinforce preexisting advantages of the most powerful groups in Israeli society. This is the opposite of social.¹⁰⁵

Dr. Dayan went on to describe the implications that the program’s entry into the university might carry, based on testimonies shared with Academia for Equality by academic staff at the program’s previous host institution, the University of Haifa:

We consulted with our colleagues at the University of Haifa, and learned from them that the operation of the Havatzalot program over there was indeed accompanied by blatant violations of essential academic conditions and of civil sphere principles. What guarantees that this will not happen at the Hebrew

¹⁰⁵ Hila Dayan, “[Van Leer Havatzalot – Academia for Equality](#)”. Read by Dr. Yael Breda of the Hebrew University at the “Mount Scopus and the Intelligence: Introduction of the Havatzalot Program to the Hebrew University”.

University as well? In Haifa, large groups of uniformed students crowded out other students in course registration and created unequal conditions for enrollment. The presence of a large and dominant group of soldiers in these courses changed the learning experience and resulted in a loss of the ability to engage in critical and free expression within them. There were instances in which the program's commander, an officer with the rank of colonel, appeared in class, and, in practice, informally supervised what was being said. This is a critical weakening of the independent standing of academia in Israel, as well as a real threat to Palestinian students in the departments in question. To those who promote the neoliberal argument that the university must transform from a public to a private institution if it wishes to preserve an independent status, let us recall that in civilized countries, even those where the entire education system is fully subsidized by the state, the autonomy of the higher education system is strictly maintained. A situation in which the government and the army intervene in academia according to their demands and preferences is one we know from dark regimes.

According to Professor Yuval Yonay, a sociology lecturer at the University of Haifa, lecturers usually have little choice but to conform to the demands of the academic institution, which in turn complies with the military's demands:

A friend from the university, who no longer teaches, consulted with me. He was a new lecturer. He was required, they told him it was expected, to teach a course that was part of the naval officers' program. And he consulted with me whether it was worth going to battle over the fact that he didn't want to take part in a military training program, and that if he were to say no, it could affect the attitude towards him, his standing in the department, and mark him as a troublemaker. So there is some kind of consideration here related to lecturers who are required to teach in these courses.

As part of the research for this report, interviews were conducted with Alon and Aviv, both former cadets in the Havatzalot program. Their names and other identifying details were changed to protect their privacy and safety.

This is how Alon describes the militarized takeover of academic space brought by the Havatzalot program and "the compound" – the on-campus student housing building that was effectively converted into a military base for the program's cadets:

There was an area in the dorms that was closed off just like a military base, with cameras, an armed guard, who was one of the soldiers. And it was always sealed off, between the dorms. In retrospect, it was very surreal. And we always

studied in military uniforms. In Haifa, Naval officers also study for a period [of their training]. So there were a lot of uniforms in the space, and also all kinds of other people, police officers and various soldiers. There were a lot. Both us and naval officers. It was very present in the space and there was always an automatic distance from all the Palestinians. That is, the Palestinians were very careful not to come near us. There was a sort of silent conversation, whose area is whose, a very clear separation. In the dorms, it is completely separated. Practically a military base. There are a lot of buildings, a whole building is ours and next to us are other buildings. In Haifa, the dorms are part of the campus, within the campus gates. Our building was called 'the compound.' It's a building that had previously been part of the regular dorms. The soldiers were inside and outside there were cameras. But if something looked strange on the cameras, if something happened, they would go outside with weapons.

Alon further explains the guards' security procedures for the program's soldiers:

The practice of having a military base inside the university created such situations [of policing and surveillance]. Not really proactive surveillance, but if someone, often a Palestinian, especially if he lives in the dorms, was seen on the camera remaining very near the entrance and sitting there for a long time, whoever was on duty would go out to him with a weapon and ask if everything is alright. Not really proactive surveillance, but the cameras covered a relatively wide range. It was very present. Quite a few situations like this happened. The Palestinian students knew to keep away from the dorms, to stay at a radius, that there was no reason to approach our dorms. The cameras had a considerable range around the dorms, and since this was a building among other dorm buildings, by definition, you could see the entrance to the next building. There wasn't any kind of absolute separation.

Alon's account suggests that the establishment of the military base within the campus, the guards' security procedures that the military set, and the security measures it imposed, including the use of security cameras, created a situation in which soldiers in intelligence training actively monitored and spied on other students at the university, particularly Palestinian students. As a result, regular students who lived in the student housing avoided certain areas for fear of being surveilled by the intelligence trainees. This, then, amounted to a serious violation of the students' privacy, to the extent that they avoided passing through certain parts of campus.

Alon adds that although the program's soldiers were required to be in military uniform, but without weapons, the program's presence on campus still led to an increase in the presence of firearms on campus:

There were all kinds of drills. Fire drills, safety drills and the like. That is the time when training takes place. Of course as a dry run and without actually using the weapons, nevertheless it involved going outside into the [campus] area with weapons. This happened quite often. In case of a fire, what should one do? We'd grab our weapons. Or, what happens if there is an alert about some possible attack? It was required to get ready with weapons and go outside. Also, part of the team was always carrying weapons. From the rank of officers and up, there was always someone carrying a weapon, even around the university. Meaning, he [an officer] would go to the cafeteria, he [an officer] would go to class – he was armed. The officers lived there, in a somewhat separate compound. There was always someone on duty. To the best of my recollection, these were officers, maybe in their third year of studies. There was always someone with a weapon. At least two or three [personnel]. That was pretty much by definition. One had to be in the building and the other two could do as they wanted. So there was always a weapon in the compound. Always. And when we would do sports exercises and things like that and go out to Mount Carmel because [it's] a mountain, someone had to have a weapon.

According to Alon, the complete separation created by the military was not limited to the establishment of the military base on campus, and also concerned the relationship between Havatzalot soldier-students and the Palestinian students at the university:

There simply were no relationships. It was very separated. No one told us, but it was like an unwritten rule, that there was such a very, very total separation. I don't think it's directly connected, but maybe as an example, on Land Day, May 1st, Nakba Day, when there was [political] activity by the Palestinian students, we would, by definition, not go to class. We would, by definition, stay in 'the compound.' I don't know if there was any real concern but there was some kind of message that we are keeping our distance from it. There was also a demand from us, the soldier-students, not to get involved in anything political, in anything at the university. So there was a lot of fear, even just of us getting close to it, definitely. And also in the space outside, of course, the students didn't talk to us. They didn't feel comfortable and there was nothing to talk to us about. There was quite a clear separation. There were the spaces where the Palestinians are and the ones where we are and it was pretty clear. There was such a division in the classes as well. Even in a class with half Palestinian students and half soldiers, it was very separated, to the extent of where we sit and who we work on assignments with. A very clear division. The separation was absolute and very effective.

The military's demand that the soldier-students refrain from participating in political activities is further evidence of the censorship the military imposes on participants in these programs. It also underscores that, unlike other students, the soldier-students are in academia for one purpose only – developing expertise for their military roles. For similar reasons, it seems, the military requires that Havatzalot soldier-students wear uniforms while on campus. First, the uniform serves as a constant reminder that they are soldiers on duty, representing the military, and therefore must exercise caution in their words and actions while at the university. Second, it functions as a barrier, preventing them from forming connections with students whose political views do not align with the military's values, and in particular from communicating with Palestinian students on campus.

Alon describes the role that the requirement to wear military uniforms played in creating this separation:

There was a feeling that you were always on duty, that we were being examined, that we were representatives of something. There was something about being in service dress uniforms all the time, and also about being looked at... it is a different presence in [the academic] space. In retrospect, the student experience was one of total separation from the Palestinians. I mean, it was mutual. There was no interaction at all. It was a very different experience [from the experience at the academic institution where Alon studies today]. Now I see it. It was like that because we were soldiers, and there was absolutely no interaction at all.

Aviv shares similar feelings regarding the requirement to wear uniforms, the reactions of the academic environment to the military presence on campus, and his position as a soldier-student in a space that is essentially civilian:

It felt like shit. Both because you would always stand out and always represent something, and your individual self is erased. Precisely in the university years, the very time when you should be able to be yourself, that isn't so. You are a soldier. Always, always when I came to class, they would say to me "Hey Havatzalon [a nickname for a Havatzalot cadet], bring this." You have no name, you're the soldier. Even the lecturers, "Hey, the soldier in the back, do you want to speak?" This also had a big impact on the whole experience and on how you perceive yourself. Because it's not just like being on a military base where everyone is the same, so being a soldier is not really special. Here you're in a civilian setting, so you necessarily stand out [...] From my perspective, I felt I wasn't so much a student and much more a soldier, throughout most of my studies.

Aviv's words illuminate another important aspect of the impacts of military presence in academic spaces – the way it affects the young soldiers themselves who participate in military-academic programs. Feelings of alienation and loss of personal identity is indeed common among soldiers in the military, especially given that one of the military's declared goals is to subsume personal identities into a collective and obedient identity and to prevent free and critical thought. Yet, these feelings seem to be amplified when soldiers are required to carry out their roles in civilian spaces, and certainly when the military does not want to risk students forming social ties that might challenge their worldview and choices.

According to Aviv, the enlistment process, followed by the military training during academic studies, added further difficulties:

I was drafted at the age of 18, right after high school. I began my service, we were there for three months, we did combat basic training at the Nitzanim military base. It was basic training that even recruits of Magal [the army's unit for basic-training commandors] do, and it was terrible [...] The difference [between us and other soldiers] is that we did the basic training and literally the next day we were already at the university. There was no break, nothing. In a single moment we just had to shift our mindset to being students. And we were really young [...] Basically the studies are for a double major degree. At the same time, we also had loads and loads of [intelligence-military] training. And just like [being a soldier in compulsory service in] the army, there were guard duties, rotations and commanders. Many times I had guard duty from 3am until 5am and then I had a class at eight.

Aviv describes the inherent contradiction of being a soldier-student and the indoctrination Israeli teenagers undergo to persuade them to apply for what the military promotes as “excellence programs”:

It [Havatzalot] places heavy limits on the soldiers. In the end, the soldiers cannot express their political opinions or even their views in general. From my experience, we were 18 years old and didn't really know what we were getting into. It's such a very naïve age. You undergo brainwashing in most high schools to enlist, to get into the best programs, intelligence, combat. Most of the soldiers are less politically aware. At that stage it's harder. At least, I know it was for me. So when I entered the program I didn't know what I was getting into and I didn't understand what the drawbacks would be. And once I was there, I was exposed to many things, and my whole perception of the world was deeply shaken at that stage. Even if I could put up with a lot and understood that many things were not right, even if I formed a very developed political awareness, I

still couldn't speak. From that age I was already out. Because I was a soldier. Even if I attended the relevant classes at the university, I couldn't speak. And of course, we couldn't participate in political demonstrations since we had to be in uniform all the time.¹⁰⁶

Aviv's words echo the reality for many youth in Israel – a lack of political, social, and personal awareness that stems from years of indoctrination into militaristic values of enlistment and sacrifice, carried out through the formal and informal education system, the media, social networks, and family members and friends. Added to this is another layer of tragedy for many soldiers in military-academic programs – being exposed at these ages to a somewhat broader range of information and political perspectives, while at the same time realizing that as soldiers they have no way to act on this new knowledge or to voice their doubts about the national-militaristic foundations and values.

Aviv goes on to describe the reactions of the academic environment to the presence of the soldier-students at the university:

There were many expressions of hatred from students. I was spat on more than once. I understand it. Palestinian students but not only them. Also cleaning workers or others. This usually happened during more tense periods [military operations]. There were times when I couldn't walk alone on campus because it could be dangerous. There were also times when we weren't allowed to, when according to procedure we had to move in pairs, because it could feel unsafe.

Aviv shares such an incident:

¹⁰⁶ According to an IDF General Staff Order, soldiers in the Israeli military are prohibited from taking part in a protest organization, speaking at a protest, or standing on a stage while protest speeches are being delivered. Under the order, a soldier may participate in a protest unless one of the following applies:

- a. The protest concerns, directly or indirectly, a partisan or political matter, or concerns IDF policy, activities, orders, decisions, missions, or missions expected to be assigned, or undermines the existence of the state or military service.
- b. The soldier is in uniform or can be identified as a soldier or associated with the IDF—whether due to their role, the identities of other participants, or any other reason.
- c. The soldier holds the rank of lieutenant colonel (Sgan Aluf) or higher, or serves in a position designated by the Head of the Personnel Directorate (Aka) as subject to these restrictions regarding participation in protests.
- d. The protest takes place during the soldier's working hours.
- e. The protest has not received the necessary permits from the Israel Police.
- f. The protest is violent or disturbs public order.
- g. The Head of the Personnel Directorate decides, for justified reasons and after consultation with the Military Advocate General's Office (MAG Corps), that soldiers should not participate in the protest, and announces this decision via IDF commanders and the Chief Administrator.

A related section of the order states that “a soldier shall not participate in any activity that undermines the existence of the state or military service.” The full order is available (in Hebrew) on the IDF Orders website, which can be accessed [here](#).

I remember one incident when a woman simply passed by, looked at me, and spat on the ground in my direction. She kept walking and I kept walking. I know it wasn't because of who I am, [but] because I represent a [military] system. That's part of the whole thing. It doesn't make me feel hatred toward her or toward anyone because I understand it. Ultimately, these are very strong emotions that arise within a person. But there were other times when I felt unsafe. Curses, insults, spitting. It never happened in classes, never from students who knew us. I'm sure they talked about it behind our backs, but not to our faces.

The testimonies of Aviv and Alon highlight another troubling aspect of the decision made by the University of Haifa, and later by the Hebrew University, to host an additional military-academic program aimed at training intelligence officers. In the case of the Hebrew University, the academic institution should have recognized that bringing the program to a campus located in a tense area, located within a divided and polarized city—where the occupation and the violence the military directs against Palestinians are felt almost everywhere—would increase the sense of insecurity and alienation among Palestinian students at the university. Thus, in turn, it was bound to provoke harsh reactions to the soldiers' presence on campus and ultimately negatively affect the soldier-students themselves.

As part of the agreement with the Hebrew University, under which the university was to provide housing for the new soldier-students, the Ministry of Defense received two buildings in the Reznik student housing complex on the Mount Scopus campus, which had previously housed regular students. The buildings were converted by the Ministry of Defense into a closed and fenced military compound, guarded by soldiers in uniform, with entry permitted only to the Havatzalot soldiers, commanders, and officers, and other military personnel. The entry of other students was strictly prohibited by military order. The building retained the name given to the soldiers' quarters back at the University of Haifa, a name that seemed to have been taken from a dystopian science fiction film – “the compound.” According to the Havatzalot program's website, in “the compound” the cadets “sleep, study, train, and more, together with their peers from their cohort and from the training program.” Their studies take place on the two campuses of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Mount Scopus and Givat Ram. During their studies, the soldier-students are required to wear service uniforms throughout their stay on campus. Academically, all soldier-students must study in the department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, with a minor in Political Science, where they learn about Middle East history, Arabic language and society, and social and political systems more broadly. They can choose their second major themselves out of four options offered by the program – Economics, Mathematics, Philosophy, and Computer Science.

According to Alon, even the curriculum itself, and the rules that apply to regular students, were repeatedly bent to accommodate the needs of the military:

There were literally courses just for us. Some were open only to us. And when parallel courses needed to fit our schedule, they opened separate ones for us, just for us. I think the course content was also adapted for us... The interaction between the university and the program was massive. Whenever we had any scheduling difficulties, because of our military obligations, we were given different dates for assignments and exams. Classes were canceled, classes were added. There was a lot of flexibility in what the program demands. I assume there were at least some differences, since the reading materials were adapted and the whole setup of the course was adjusted to our schedule. So there were periods with more reading materials and more assignments. The exam dates were different. I wouldn't be surprised at all if even the content itself was different. And there was one course that was only for soldiers. Some general philosophy course, something really broad... I believe it was more in the epistemological field, something that is supposedly more related to intelligence... Some made-up course created for us by the university. In addition, part of our military-intelligence studies were recognized as academic credit. I don't remember in what scope or in what form but it existed. Our track is a double major, and the idea is not to do the full quota of credits required but fewer. I remember we had to complete about 15-20 fewer credits because those were covered and credited through the intelligence studies in the Havatzalot program. So they were recognized, with a passing grade, [meaning] there was no [numerical] grade for it. Nonetheless, we had fewer courses, fewer academic requirements, because it was credited to us. That was quite significant. Ultimately, it was a double major track, which amounted to two and a half years since in the last semester we did mainly academic work [most double majors are three- or four-year programs]. It was quite rushed and it was possible because we did fewer courses. The university wasn't exposed to the content that fulfilled those credits.

The subjection of academic conditions and degree eligibility requirements for a degree, which Alon describes, resembles the demands found in the tender for the Erez program reviewed above. According to the tender, roughly one fifth of the credits required for a university's bachelor's degree are recognized on the basis of non-academic military training that bears no relation whatsoever to the academic field of study.

Aviv and Alon's testimonies reflect the inherent contradiction in the presence of soldier-students in academic institutions. On the one hand they are in an institution that, at least conceptually, is supposed to encourage free and critical thought and discussion. On the other hand, such expression is forbidden to them.

CONCLUSION

The first part of this section briefly surveyed a number of military-academic programs that are not part of the military's academic reserve track, in order to illustrate additional forms of intervention by the Ministry of Defense and the military in higher education in Israel. This was followed by two case studies of "elite" military-academic programs: the Erez program of the Ground Forces, intended to provide academic training for combat officers, which is expected to begin operating at Tel Aviv University; and the Havatzalot program, which operated for fourteen years at the University of Haifa, and has been operating since 2019 at the Hebrew University.

A close examination of the Erez program's tender shows that the purpose of the military's collaborating with academia extends far beyond the integration of the program's participants into academic studies as regular students. The demands imposed by the Ministry of Defense and the military on academic institutions are completely unreasonable, as they oblige the institutions to adapt their procedures and modes of operation to the military's requirements. This involves discrimination against other students, subordination of academic staff to the army's demands – including restrictions on faculty members' freedom of expression and a requirement to deliver lectures at military bases – changes to the eligibility conditions for receiving academic degrees, the establishment of de facto military bases in or near the university, and also a large-scale influx of weapons onto the campuses. The case of the Havatzalot program, along with the testimonies of former participants, shows that the program caused significant harm to both the soldier-students enrolled in it and to other students in the academic institutions.

In conclusion, Chapter A has shown how processes of militarization are manifested in military-academic study programs, and how these programs harm both regular students and the soldier-students themselves. We highlighted the active role of academia in managing these programs, in the recruitment of youth, and in silencing criticism of such collaborations. We also underscored how the academic institutions profit from these partnerships, not least in the form of considerable funding.

For the responses of the academic institutions and the Council for Higher Education to the claims in the report, see the [appendix of responses](#).

CHAPTER II

SPACE

This chapter deals with the phenomena of militarization of campus space and examines various aspects of militarism as they are expressed in the physical spaces of academic institutions: the public areas on campuses, classrooms, and other academic spaces.

The chapter is divided into two parts. The first focuses on the presence on campuses of soldiers in uniform, as well as soldiers and civilians carrying weapons. The second examines military compounds located within academic campuses, and specifically the possibility of an intelligence base existing in the central building of the University of Haifa.

“WHAT'S SO HUMANISTIC ABOUT THIS MILITARY?": ON UNIFORMS AND RIFLES

One of the most obvious, overt, and prominent manifestations of militarism is the presence of military uniforms and firearms in civilian space. For many Jewish-Israeli citizens this presence is almost invisible, but for many others, including Palestinians and other groups who have experienced institutional violence, as well as people who carry psychological scars from their military service or from their encounters with the military system, it is a deeply present and threatening reality. In Israeli academic institutions, there is no prohibition against entering campuses with military uniforms or carrying firearms. Surveys and interviews we conducted with students and academics reveal a significant gap between the perception of the Israeli mainstream regarding uniforms and weapons and how these are experienced by the groups they threaten and marginalize.

In January 2019, the issue of military uniforms on campuses made headlines after several media outlets published a two-minute video documenting a hallway conversation between Dr. Carola Hilfrich, a lecturer at the Hebrew University, and a student in uniform. In the video, Hilfrich is heard telling the student that she “cannot be naive and ask to be treated as a civilian when you choose to wear a uniform. You are a soldier in the Israeli military, and you will be treated accordingly” – meaning that wearing a military uniform, especially in an academic, supposedly civilian space, and particularly in courses with Palestinian students for whom the uniform represents an occupying and violent military, has political significance.¹⁰⁷

Several Israeli media outlets distorted the details of the incident, claiming that an argument had developed between the lecturer and the soldier during class and that afterward, the lecturer had called the soldier for a talk and scolded her. According to an investigation conducted by *Haaretz* and a separate inquiry by the university, it was found that, contrary to the claims, no argument had taken place between the lecturer and the soldier during class, and that it was the soldier who had initiated the conversation with the lecturer after class.¹⁰⁸

Following the incident, the National Union of Israeli Students published a statement condemning the lecturer, and soon afterward the right-wing movement Im Tirtzu

¹⁰⁷ Inbar Toizer, [“A Lecturer at the Hebrew University Confronts a Soldier: ‘You Came in Uniform, You Will Be Treated Accordingly’”](#), *Ynet*, January 2, 2019.

¹⁰⁸ Shira Kadari-Ovadia, [“Lecturer at the Hebrew University Faces Threats Following False Report About a Reprimand of a Soldier in Uniform”](#), *Haaretz*, January 6, 2019.

also seized the opportunity, attacking the lecturer and calling on the then-Minister of Education, Naftali Bennett, to fire her. That same day, Im Tirtzu organised a protest on campus, calling for the lecturer's dismissal. In response to an article published about the incident, the Hebrew University backed the soldier and boasted about its various collaborations with the Israeli military, stating that “the university respects all of its students, including those who come to study during their military service, whether they are active-duty, career, or reserve soldiers. Many soldiers study at the university, some as part of unique collaborations with various security authorities – including the IDF.”¹⁰⁹ According to *Haaretz*, following the incident, Hilfrich received numerous hate letters, and the university received explicit death threats against her.

Due to the threats, Hilfrich stayed away from the university for several weeks. Later, an investigative report by the news magazine *Local Call* revealed that the “soldier” was in fact an officer who had long been active in Im Tirtzu and had even received a “certificate of excellence” from the organization for her activities. It further emerged that the officer had started her military service as an academic reservist and, at the time of the incident, was studying for a master's degree at the university on behalf of the military. After the class, which focused on Freud's “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego,” the officer approached a Palestinian student who apparently refused to speak with her. Following this, the officer approached the lecturer and asked to talk with her.¹¹⁰ The university's investigation also found that the conversation between the lecturer and the student was much longer than the short clip that was edited for the media.¹¹¹ Following the incident, Academia for Equality published a letter of support for the lecturer.¹¹²

Im Tirtzu also maintains a blacklist of “left-wing” lecturers, titled “Know the Professor.”¹¹³ This list includes Hilfrich and many others in Israeli academia, and the group encourages students to “report” on their lecturers in order to deter them from expressing political opinions.

¹⁰⁹ See note 107 above.

¹¹⁰ Oren Ziv, “[The Soldier Whom the Lecturer ‘Humiliated’ Had Previously Been an Outstanding Activist in Im Tirtzu](#)”, *Local Call*, January 6, 2019.

¹¹¹ Oren Ziv, “[Internal Investigation at the Hebrew University: The Soldier Was Not Attacked, the Lecturer Did Not Reprimand](#)”, *Local Call*, January 8, 2019.

¹¹² See Academia for Equality's [Facebook post](#) regarding the Hilfrich case, addressed to the leadership of the Hebrew University, January 6, 2019 (in Hebrew).

¹¹³ “[Know Your Lecturer](#)”, Political Campus, Im Tirtzu (in Hebrew).

About a week after the incident, the university published a massive ad in the print edition of *Haaretz*, in which it continued to side with the officer, boasting of its extensive ties with Israeli security forces, and turning its back on the lecturer:



Image text: *Students in uniform? Welcome! The Hebrew University and the Student Union warmly support all students who are soldiers studying at the university during their compulsory service, reserve duty, or in the special programs jointly run by the university, the IDF, and other security bodies in the State of Israel. We support the right of all students and all staff members to come in whatever attire they choose.*

We are proud to support the Hebrew University staff members who serve in the reserves, are parents of soldiers, or whose partners serve in the IDF—both in routine times and in emergencies.

The Hebrew University and the Student Union run many support programs for students serving in the IDF, both in reserve duty and compulsory service. We will continue to promote and support student soldiers and uphold this commitment to them, as we have in the past.

The university is committed to ensuring appropriate and respectful treatment for all who enter its gates. The university regrets the exceptional incident and offers its apology to anyone who was hurt by it.

*Signed,
Prof. Asher Cohen, President of the Hebrew University
Shir Mordechai, Chair of the Student Union.*

A large advertisement published by the Hebrew University in the print edition of *Haaretz*, following the Hilfrich case. Used under Section 27(a) of the Copyright Law.

The Hilfrich case, and the university's response to it, offer yet another glimpse into the priorities of Israeli academia – military-academic cooperation comes first, and the well-being and protection of lecturers comes second. Instead of protecting the lecturer and her right to freedom of expression, even if her views are unpopular among large segments of Israeli society, as would be expected from an academic institution that champions free and critical thought and discussion, the university chose to publish a massive ad in a major media outlet that not only sided with the student-officer herself, but with uniformed soldiers in general, all while boasting of its fruitful collaborations with the military and the defense establishment.

Twelve years earlier, in 2007, Nizar Hassan was dismissed from his position as a film lecturer at Sapir Academic College after he refused to apologize to Eyal Cohen, a student he had asked not to attend his classes in military uniform, explaining that in his classes

he wanted to see students, not soldiers. The incident caused a media uproar and protests against the lecturer. The college's president at the time, Prof. Zeev Tzahor, demanded that Hassan apologize in writing to the student and that “in the words of the apology, you must refer to your commitment to honoring IDF uniforms and the absolute right of the student, of any student, to enter your classroom in uniform”, and that “I will not accept an apology that does not refer to the honoring of IDF uniforms or that has a political tone of negotiation. Your apology will be delivered to Mr. Eyal Cohen through me. Mr. Eyal Cohen has the right to publish the apology as he sees fit.” At the end of the letter, the college president clarified that the lecturer was suspended from all activity at the college.¹¹⁴ In response to the article about Hassan’s dismissal published on Ynet, Sapir College stated: “Since Nizar Hassan's apology was not received, the procedure of termination of employment was initiated, as is customary in an academic institution.”¹¹⁵ It can be assumed that the story would have ended differently had the lecturer been Jewish rather than Palestinian. In any case, the incident made clear to lecturers, both Jewish and non-Jewish, the boundaries of what is permissible within academia, and likely served as a warning sign for lecturers in the future.

While students in military-academic programs such as Havatzalot or Erez are required to wear uniforms while on campus, the question arises as to why students who are studying at the university concurrently with their military service (whether active duty or reserve) cannot come to class in civilian clothes, thereby making the academic institution a safer and more accommodating environment for other students and lecturers.

Professor Yuval Yonay offers an explanation for the military’s demand that soldier-students in military-academic programs wear uniforms while on campus:

There's a classic book in sociology called “Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates” by Erving Goffman, one of the great sociologists. His argument was that in hospitals, prisons, boarding schools, and the military, uniforms exist because they are part of the internal management of the relationships between the inmates or other residents and the staff, involving discipline and all sorts of functions of how such an institution is managed, so I think that's also the issue here. The interesting ideological perception is “we are coming, we are soldiers,” maybe also [the military’s desire] that they will behave more politely and remember and speak differently when they ask questions as representatives of the military and not just as students.

¹¹⁴ Idan Yosef, [“The Demand: Apology or Dismissal”](#), *News1*, January 31, 2008 (in Hebrew).

¹¹⁵ Moran Zlikovitz, [“Sapir College Dismisses Lecturer Who Confronted a Soldier”](#), *Ynet*, February 11, 2008 (in Hebrew). For an English report about the incident, see Jonathan Cook, [“Academic freedom? Not for Arabs in Israel”](#), *The Electronic Intifada*, March 4, 2008.

Although it is impossible to know with certainty the military's intentions in requiring soldier-students in various military-academic programs to wear uniforms while on campus, it can be assumed that they are related to the reasons suggested by Prof. Yonay, which also align with the testimonies of past Havatzalot program cadets and various clauses in the Academic Reserve contract mentioned earlier – a constant reminder to soldier-students that even when in civilian spaces, such as the university, they remain subject to the authority, orders and regulations of the military. This is aimed at preventing them from expressing opinions that do not align with the military's views and to distance themselves from students who pose a “threat” to it, particularly Palestinian students. Similarly, the presence of soldiers in military uniform in civilian spaces also serves as a reminder to others on campus that the military is present everywhere, thereby also normalizing other aspects of militarization. This “disciplinary function,” as Prof. Yonay suggests, operates both internally and externally: at the soldier-students themselves – discouraging their exposure to non-sanctioned worldviews – and at the broader non-military community on campus.

According to Dr. Anat Matar, no academic institution in Israel prohibits entry to campus with firearms, and even at those that nominally restrict weapons, such restrictions are not enforced:

All campuses in Israel, except for Tel Aviv University, require only that a valid firearms license be shown. So first, an asterisk here: I wonder if anyone even checks it, because at least regarding Tel Aviv University, I understood that people simply walk in; no one really asks them [if they are carrying a gun], and if they do ask, they don't ask to see it, and if they do ask to see it, they don't whether there's a license. This whole thing doesn't really work. So that's [the case in] all the campuses in Israel. Only in the Tel Aviv campus does the regulation appear in the bylaws, the unenforced regulation, that a weapon must be concealed so that it cannot be seen. This means you have to basically walk around with a pistol in your bag. As for that, various Palestinian students I spoke with in the past said that, in some way, it scares them more.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ The Tel Aviv University regulations, as well as the reality on the ground, changed after October 2023. The updated regulations can be found on the Tel Aviv University website.



A pile of weapons outside the ANU Museum on the Tel Aviv University campus.

As part of her activism in Academia for Equality, Dr. Matar contacted Tel Aviv University several times, requesting that it enforce its own security regulations, which effectively only permit the entry of handguns onto campus, meaning that the entry of long firearms, i.e., military rifles, is prohibited (since long firearms cannot be concealed). According to Matar, these attempts were unsuccessful:

I think it would be an achievement not to see weapons on campus. And this seems to me like a goal that can be strived for, and that was what I wanted to get Tel Aviv University to do: first of all, to enforce its own regulation [regarding concealed handguns and the prohibition of bringing long firearms onto campus], and then, if that succeeded, to export it through Academia for Equality to various other universities. That was the plan. The plan was well received by Neta Ziv [Tel Aviv University's Vice President for Fairness, Diversity and Community] and then it ran into a stone wall put up by the university's security division, and [since then] it's been diluted and nothing is happening with it. The head of the security division himself wrote to me several times, "I don't understand, what, are you ashamed of IDF soldiers?"

Dr. Matar then describes another attempt to change the handgun regulations on academic campuses, this time at Bar-Ilan University, and the correspondence between its security division and the security division at Tel Aviv University:

There was some correspondence with the security division at Bar-Ilan, because I disclosed this story to an [academic colleague] there after she told me she had seen someone in her seminar or leaving her seminar with a firearm and she was shocked. So she tried to find out whether it would be possible to implement at Bar-Ilan our non enforced regulation [regarding concealed handguns], and then the two security divisions corresponded. The Tel Aviv University security division told them: "nonsense, our regulation, not only is it not enforced, it should also be removed from the bylaws already." So now the pressure is coming

from two directions, and the trend is apparently [to remove the regulation regarding a concealed handgun from the Tel Aviv University security bylaws], I assume, more in his favor [of the security officer at Tel Aviv University] than in our favor, or to leave it as an uninforced status quo.



Soldiers in the dining area of the Sharet Building, Tel Aviv University, 2023.

Dr. Matar clarifies that the regulation permitting the entry of a concealed handgun under Tel Aviv University's security procedures effectively amounts to a ban on the entry of military rifles onto campus. However, the regulation is not actually enforced:

According to this regulation, rifles are not supposed to be brought in at all, but many people walk around campus with them because there are many visits by entire units of soldiers who come either to the Museum of the Jewish People [the “ANU” museum] or to events at Smolarsh [an auditorium at Tel Aviv University]. That's mainly it. I mean, there are also training sessions here and there, but mainly events at Smolarsh or at the museum. You simply cannot walk around campus for a few days without seeing such a spectacle. Everyone just enters, it's clear that no one checks their firearms and permits because they come in military uniform, and I saw that with my own eyes. In short, you don't have to make an effort to see it. And usually they [the groups of soldiers] pile all their weapons at the entrance [to the ANU museum], and someone [a soldier] guards it, or not, and they go inside for whatever they came for. The bottom line is that they just feel at home walking around like that, and if anyone ever approaches them, they have no idea what is wanted from them. Why should a campus look like a military unit?

In recent years, efforts have been made by other activists to turn Israeli academic campuses into gun-free spaces. An example can be found in the work of the [Gun Free Kitchen Table](#) project, a coalition of civil-society organizations whose goal is to build a broad and diverse movement to reduce the presence of handguns in Israel's civilian sphere. Reli Mazali, a co-founder of the coalition and the project's coordinator (as well

as a co-founder of New Profile and an active member), sheds light on additional aspects of the issue of weapons in Israeli academia:

The subject that I have been focusing on for about fifteen years, which is one piece of the bigger issue of firearms, is what's called small arms. In Israeli academia, there is an anomaly. There is no small arms research in Israeli academia. In many other places, including places that are considered "developing countries," there is research both on the distribution of small arms and injuries from small arms, for example as a public-health issue, epidemiological studies. How many, which groups are affected, of which genders, in which geographical areas, at what frequencies, what influences it. Lots and lots of different studies. In Brazil, Colombia, India, and the United States as well. Here there are none. Academics here don't write about it. They don't ask questions about it. They are not aware of it as a research topic. Not as a public health topic, not in criminology, not in psychology. If there are, I might be missing one or two. But I looked. Not in gender studies, where it's also common elsewhere. Not in government studies. It's nonexistent. It's like a blind spot, an invisible area.

According to Mazali, the lack of research on small arms in Israeli academia is a direct result of Israel's militaristic culture, both because of the massive presence of weapons in civilian spaces in general, and because of the deliberate blurring of lines between those carrying weapons as part of military, semi-military, and as individuals:

This anomaly is, in my opinion, a product of the fact that weapons here are so normalized. They are so natural. They seem to us, we privileged Jews, to be entirely for our benefit and protection, that the topic doesn't even come up for research. And in addition, it's a topic no one wants to touch, because it immediately raises questions. For example, if you talk about victims, then which ones? Where? In which area? Are we talking about the occupied territories, or are we not talking about the occupied territories? Are we talking about military contexts or not? What about the Border Police?¹¹⁷ Because of the blurring, the lack of boundaries – and there's a great deal of blurring between security bodies and people in security roles – you immediately get tangled up in these questions. Which weapons are we counting? Are we also counting settlers' weapons? Are we not counting settlers' weapons? I mean, what? So there's none.

¹¹⁷ *Magav* (מג"ב), Israel's Border Police (or Border Guard), is the police force formally responsible for securing Israel's borders. It was originally established as a Frontier Corps within the Israeli military before being transferred to police command. Although officially a police unit, many of its personnel are soldiers, and in practice it performs extensive policing and security operations in the occupied West Bank. *Magav* exemplifies the blurred boundaries between military and civilian security bodies in Israel. It has been involved in numerous violent incidents against Palestinians in Jerusalem and the West Bank and is also periodically deployed to police demonstrations within Israel.

Another reason Mazali notes is the lack of data collection and the absence of transparency regarding military-related matters and anything designated as “security-related” in Israel, which automatically becomes inaccessible knowledge:

There is also no data. We are pushing for data, really, ever since I've been working on it there has been a small change, an improvement to some extent in the data we receive, but overall it is very difficult to obtain data, and there is also simply no data. Not only because they won't give it to us, which is one way this affects academic research, but also because they simply don't collect it. They don't collect it in the first place. Because you can't even make these decisions. How are these decisions made? There is a report by the Knesset Research and Information Center (RIC) that was released in the summer of 2021 on the issue of gun-related injuries in Israel. It's a report where the questions it asks are questions that we fed into the system, and its framing is the framing of the Gun Free Kitchen Table coalition. Throughout the report, there are discussions on the lack of data. And they clearly point out which data should have been there and isn't and couldn't be obtained. So all the absence of data, absence of data collection, absence of data accessibility, is also relevant to academia. I know of an academic who did research in collaboration with MAMDA [the military's Behavioral Sciences Department], but there was a prior agreement that the researcher would not be able to decide what to publish and whether to publish anything at all. And indeed, they didn't let her publish. The data was only exposed to the IDF. And you can't research certain things without cooperation with the military. Violence against women in the military, for example. You can't research it, even though the military is significant enough here for this to be an important and relevant research question. And added to that, the information is not under your control, neither its collection nor its accessibility and transparency. There are many subjects where – even if we request information under the Freedom of Information Act – the answer for many things is that they are classified. Classified. And this is used sweepingly, it is really misused. For example, why is the number of armed police officers in Israel – a body that is supposed to be civilian in every sense of the word – I want to know how many armed police officers are armed and which ones are armed, and it's “classified”. Why? Why should it be classified? So the entire field, anything deemed “security-related,” anything defined somewhere as “security-related,” becomes inaccessible knowledge, not under the control of researchers, and there researchers are in a position where they are not independent because they have signed such agreements [with the military or other security bodies] to conduct research, or they are independent but lack adequate access to information.

Mazali clarifies that the demand to make campuses weapon-free spaces is not impossible, and that there is even a precedent for such a policy:

At the Mount Scopus campus, until 2007, it was forbidden to enter with a firearm. We're talking about the years of the second Intifada, very threatening years in many respects, and it was forbidden to enter with a firearm. There was a mechanism to deposit weapons at the entrance, and then it was stopped, apparently at the order of the police. I don't know exactly what happened there, this is a testimony from a security officer who remembered it and gave us [Gun Free Kitchen Table] a testimony. I generally think there should be less and less weapons in civilian spaces.

According to Mazali, this is especially true for academic spaces:

I think that a weapon immediately shifts power dynamics in a very sharp and extreme way, even without any “misuse” of it, the very presence of it on someone, it can be threatening and paralyzing. Within academia, ideally, and also to some extent this is its stated intention, is for there to be freedom of opinion and freedom of research, which also means the expression of things that are irritating, unpopular, that can be perceived as threatening. What is a weapon doing there? Not to mention the human composition, which is supposed to be diverse and from all population groups, when it is absolutely clear which groups feel more threatened by firearms and which groups carry firearms. I think that academia is supposed to be one of the spaces that demonstrates or illustrates what a truly civilian space looks like – what a truly civilian and free space could be, something we don't have in this country. This is a country that is one big military base. So we don't have many such spaces. The modeling of academia was supposed to be like that. We talk about freedom, we talk about freedom of thought, which also includes freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, this should have been a space that sets an example of what a non-militaristic and non-conflictual space, according to the accepted national divisions, can look like. That's why I think that entry of weapons should not have been allowed.

A weapon indeed shifts power dynamics in an extreme way, and in Israel, the division between who carries a firearm in civilian spaces and who does not is clear – most of the soldiers and citizens who are licensed to carry a weapon in Israel are Jewish men. Of course, a latent power dynamic already exists between Jewish Israelis and Palestinian citizens of Israel, and the arming of the former exacerbates this imbalance even further. Supporters of the presence of firearms in public civilian spaces often claim that they create a sense of security for those around them. In practice, however, as can be seen from the various testimonies in this subsection [and later in [Chapter V: Perceptions of Collaboration](#)],

weapons actually evoke feelings of insecurity among many students and academics. This insecurity stems, among other things, from the fact that on many occasions, men carrying firearms have used them against family members and acquaintances (especially women); that the likelihood of suicide increases when a weapon is present; and that, in general, firearms are used violently and offensively rather than defensively.

Among many students, the presence of weapons in the academic space also creates threatening and uncomfortable feelings. This is how Hiba, a student at Tel Aviv University, describes one of her encounters with a weapon on campus:

I remember an incident with someone in civilian clothing who had a handgun and was sitting next to me at Café Netto [a cafe in the Gilman Humanities building at Tel Aviv University]. The gun was pointing toward our side. It was in his pocket, it was 9 a.m., the first week of the semester, so there were a lot of people around. It made us nervous that he had a gun. My friend went over to him and told him that it was uncomfortable for us that he was sitting next to us with his gun. He was with a group of friends and they started laughing about it. He himself was really calm and didn't say anything, but his friends told her that it was absurd for her to come over and ask something like that, or to express her opinion and how she felt about it. After that, he left.



Officers with weapons outside the Coller School of Management building at Tel Aviv University, 2023.

Photo: Nissi Peli.

Hiba goes on to share another incident she experienced involving a student in civilian clothing who was carrying a firearm: There was a lecture at Tel Aviv University for students in the School of Management, and a Jewish student in civilian clothing brought a newspaper article about an attack that had occurred in Hadera the day before. He stepped outside to make a sort of performance for the class, and he had a handgun in his pocket – visible, clearly meant to be visible. The article was laid

out on the desk, and the weapon was right there with him. Palestinian students from various campus groups wrote a letter, and afterwards there was a meeting with the university president and the dean. Following the meeting, they sent us their response by email.”

Hiba shares another incident she experienced with a student in civilian clothes who was carrying a firearm:

There was a lecture at Tel Aviv University for students in the Faculty of Management, and a Jewish student in civilian clothes brought a newspaper article about an attack that had happened in Hadera the day before. He was trying to make a performance with it to the class, and he had a handgun in his pocket, exposed, clearly meant to be visible. It was purposeful: the article was laid out on his desk, and the weapon was right there with him. Palestinian students from various campus groups wrote a letter, and afterwards there was a meeting with the university president and the dean. They sent us their response in an email after the meeting.

The letter to the university leadership was written by the four Arab student cells at Tel Aviv University: Almunata - Arab Law Students Forum (المنتدى - منتدى طالبات وطلاب), Jafra - Balad Student Cadre at Tel-Aviv University, Al-Sheikh Muwannis (الحقوق العرب), (جفرا - التّجَمُّع الطّلابي في الشّيخ مؤنّس), the Edward Said Forum (منتدى ادوارد سعيد) and Roaya (رؤية-جامعة تل ابيب). The letter, which was sent to the university rector, Prof. Mark Shtaif, the vice rector, Prof. Eyal Zisser, and the dean of students, Prof. Drorit Neumann, was titled “The spread of the phenomenon of firearms on Campus.”

The student groups wrote:

Over the past week, many students have been seen on campus carrying firearms in a manner that contradicts regulations 5(d) and 5(e) of the university's security procedures. According to these regulations, a loaded weapon must not be carried inside the campus, and the owner of the weapon is responsible for unloading the magazine outside the university grounds. Additionally, the person carrying the weapon must conceal it – something that some students seem to have deliberately violated. For example, on the 28th of the month, a student in the Faculty of Management entered a class as part of the seminar “Service Economics”, while carrying a firearm [...] During the class, he went up to the podium to present an assignment, and in what appeared to be a deliberate act, he exposed the weapon so that everyone could see it. The firearm remained visible throughout his presentation, and he covered it only after finishing. This incident, like other similar ones, caused fear and anxiety among many Arab students and severely undermined their learning experience. Just

a few days ago, students at the Hebrew University thought they had the right and authority to attack two Arab students and arrest them – all just because they were singing in Arabic; although the reason is not really important, and the main point is that the identity components of the Arab students are a factor that raises suspicion according to this logic. This reflects a very dangerous wave of militarization that sees Arab-Palestinian students as a legitimate target for intimidation and potentially worse. We see that behind this phenomenon lies a clear message directed against Arab-Palestinian students. We emphasize that the militarization of the campus is unacceptable to us, and it is not a reality we should grow accustomed to. The university cannot be a neutral player in such a scene, and silence in the face of this phenomenon constitutes active support for it. Therefore, we demand that the issue be treated with the utmost urgency and seriousness, and that any student who allows himself to disregard the peace and sense of security of the Arab students will not find a place for himself within university walls.

A few days later, the university responded:

The security officer has clarified to all security guards at the gates to be careful to question everyone who enters about firearm possession, and to explain the university's policy on the matter, including the requirement to keep weapons concealed while on campus. Regarding the specific incident, to the best of our knowledge, an inquiry was conducted with the student at the unit level.

From our conversations with students at Tel Aviv University, all testified that they were never asked about carrying a firearm upon entering the university, even after the security officer's alleged clarification. In addition, despite the fact that regulation 5(e) in the university's security procedures stipulates that “the weapon must be concealed within the campus grounds,” as the university itself noted in its response to the students' letter, a regulation that effectively prohibits the entry of military rifles onto campus, the university nevertheless allows soldiers carrying military rifles to enter, as evidenced by many testimonies and photographs sent to us during the course of this research.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Tel Aviv University, “Security Procedures”, Regulation 5 (in Hebrew).



The conference “Fire Employment in a Dynamic, Technology-Intensive Environment,” held at Tel Aviv University in 2022. The event included speeches and panels by senior military officials, as well as an exhibition of weaponry. From a post on the Facebook page “Beit HaTotchan.”

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The presence of firearms is not unique to Tel Aviv University. Students and lecturers at other academic institutions also regularly encounter firearms and military-uniformed individuals on campus. This is how Eyal, a law student at Bar-Ilan University, describes it:

There are quite a few soldiers, but also many armed civilians. Mainly settlers, people carrying firearms. A lot. Also various police officers, but mostly many settlers, officers, and the like. In every class. I can't think of a single class where there wasn't someone with a firearm. Really absolute, and many of them. And around the campus, too: you walk around and constantly see guns. Whether it's soldiers in uniform with weapons or civilians with weapons, it's extremely, extremely common.

According to Eyal, the presence of firearms in the academic space is threatening and does not increase his sense of security at all:

In general it bothers me, with regard to soldiers it bothers me but much less. There is something about civilians with guns that is far more frightening. Also because you are less used to it, and also because there is something about the hidden-exposed nature of a handgun that is more stressful. A student I'm talking to about something in class, suddenly you discover he has a gun and it's unsettling. Also in terms of numbers. That is, I had classes with one or two soldiers with weapons, but civilians with weapons where there are many is an unpleasant situation. So yes, it's very, very scary. They also feel comfortable, it creates an atmosphere, I feel that it's a less safe atmosphere. It's definitely felt.

According to Prof. Yuval Yonay, the presence of firearms on campus may also deter students from studying in certain courses, as happened in a course he taught:

It was the first class of a course. Part of the meeting was dedicated to introductions and explaining what the course would cover. A student who was enrolled suddenly didn't return after the break. I wrote her a rather annoyed message, saying something like: how is it possible? it's a bit insulting that we are talking and making plans and suddenly without giving any reason you disappear. And

she wrote back to me that she left because she was agitated by the fact that a student next to her had a very visible gun holstered to his waist. She said it aroused all sorts of fears in her and she simply couldn't stay there. I don't remember exactly what I wrote but maybe I suggested that I would talk to him, [but] I don't have the authority to demand that he come without a gun, or that he places it somewhere where it can't be seen or anything like that.



Soldiers at the entrance to the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at the Hebrew University, 2023.

Photo: Melissa Danz.

According to Ariel, a Jewish-Israeli doctoral student in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Haifa:

[I encounter weapons on campus] all the time. Very often. Everywhere. In the hallways, on the lawn, in the food court, at conferences. Completely visible firearms, some even with a magazine inserted. Civilians, or at least [those who] identified as civilians. In civilian clothes, and also identified verbally as civilians a few times. But I haven't confronted them; rather, I take a step back and stay quiet. I also see [Soldiers in uniform] all the time, on a daily basis. In classrooms, outside of classrooms, at conferences, seminars. In courses I took, and in courses I taught.

Ariel then describes the feelings that arise in him at the sight of weapons and soldiers on campus:

As a student it made me very uncomfortable, you know. A feeling of "something sacrilegious", that this doesn't belong here, why is it here? Not that the university is some holy place, but still, it seems appropriate that this wouldn't be part of it. It always felt very uncomfortable, very out of place. And then also you as a student or I as a student, feel, why am I here? Why, if they are here, why am I

here too ? Some of these courses I ended up leaving midway. For example, there was one course I took where besides me and maybe five others, everyone was a soldier and they all had weapons, and after three or four classes I just quit that course. I dropped it. There was just an unpleasant atmosphere in the classroom. I was very uncomfortable sitting in the classroom because they were all soldiers and all armed. It reminded me more of associations with basic military training and such, of Sunday morning education classes in basic training, so after three or four meetings I just stopped coming to that course. Not because the material wasn't interesting, the material was actually very interesting and the lecturer was interesting, but the whole atmosphere in the classroom felt too military. They were active-duty soldiers, maybe from Havatzalot or something else, I don't remember anymore. It wasn't just from one program either there were several. There were people there in navy uniforms, air force uniforms, [regular military] olive-green uniforms. That is, there were several kinds of soldiers there.

Ariel also describes an academic conference he attended in Jerusalem:

There was a policewoman who lectured at the conference, and another security officer from a settlement who gave a talk and then you can't ask questions. Because they all come at you with their militancy and they talk nonsense in their lectures and no one dares to ask a question because they are standing in front of some Rambo that if you say something wrong, who knows what might happen. No one feels comfortable asking questions. I remember more than that – in a course I taught there was one soldier, some reserve officer who came once a week to study there. And as a lecturer, you don't feel comfortable telling him he's wrong. You don't feel comfortable contradicting him. Or you don't feel comfortable talking about certain things you wanted to bring up in class because there's a soldier in the room, and maybe you want to criticize the army, for example. Or to critique things related to it, and you don't feel comfortable, because he's there, and it feels like you're criticizing him personally. Now, it's clear that the criticism is not personal but the very presence suddenly makes it very difficult to say all sorts of things. So I found myself, both as a listener and as a lecturer, often holding back, censoring myself, so that there wouldn't be drama in the classroom, so that there wouldn't be drama in the lecture. Because it can go who knows where. Not that you are in some real danger or something like that but still, it's not safe, you still end up censoring yourself because of this presence.

From the testimonies of Prof. Yonay and Ariel, it is clear that the presence of weapons in academic spaces, and especially in classrooms, may not only limit the expression of students but also cause students to leave courses they are studying, whether out of genuine fear of the presence of a deadly killing tool in their environment, or out of a

feeling of not belonging to a space that has lost its academic-civilian character in favor of clear militaristic features.

Beyond the real and threatening implications of having firearms present in academic spaces, their presence all carries symbolic meaning. This is how Ariel describes it:

There is a person with a gun in the classroom, but he can just as well sit in class without a gun. They can store their weapons somewhere else, for that matter, or not come to the university with a weapon at all. When they are there with a weapon, I don't know why they need it. I mean, why do you need a weapon here? Is someone threatening you? No. Is someone attacking you here? No. Maybe someone will attack you verbally in this classroom, do you need a weapon for that? No, because you can give verbal answers. You don't need a weapon for that. And with a gun in the room, for me, as someone who has something to say to these people, I simply can't say it when there is a firearm in the classroom. Not to get into arguments, not to get into anything with them. Because the presence of a weapon is threatening and intimidating to me, on the most basic level.

Ariel's testimony and Mazali's observations make it clear that for many people, the very presence of a weapon in a civilian space is in itself threatening, even when the weapon is not used offensively. This intimidating presence causes students like Ariel to refrain from expressing their views or challenging the discussion, precisely in the academic space that is supposed to encourage such expressions.

According to Ariel, the very idea of an academic space free of militaristic symbols borders on the absurd:

It's a bit funny to say this about this university [the University of Haifa] because all of it is really a militaristic symbol. Not all of it but large parts of it. I have a very clear perception of what the university is supposed to be and can be. And it's not just me, it's also a lot of faculty members at the university. Here we come to talk in a human, relaxed, fair way, there are power dynamics but they are power dynamics that are understood within the academic system and the moment you introduce some symbolic element there, of a very threatening force, a force that is no longer an academic, cultural, or educational force, but a military force, then suddenly you feel that there is another reason for which the university exists. That you are there for a different reason. You start feeling that if I and these students, these soldiers, are all taking the same class, then maybe I don't really belong here. Because apparently this class serves something in the military system as well, something related to the occupation, to the military regime in the occupied territories or that exists here, or around us.

Ariel's reflections raise, once again, a fundamental question: who does academia serve? Is it even possible to separate academia from the state – and in Israel's case – academia from the military? Can a genuinely civilian institution exist in Israel, one not fully subordinated to the whims and demands of the military regime, and moreover: can there be a civilian-academic body that allows its members, or even encourage them, to truly freely and openly critique state institutions, the military, the military industry, militarism, the occupation, and other forms of institutionalized violence?

Ariel then describes the feeling of alienation that arises with the unsettling realization that the academic system ultimately serves the military system:

The moment the soldiers are there [at the university] in uniform and the moment you understand that this is part of their military training, that the military put them there and funds these studies for them, then suddenly you feel that this is not the place you belong. I mean, I pretty much ran away from the military, simply because I really didn't want to be there. And then when I come to the university, I suddenly discover that the same guys are also there. And that it's the same system, that it's a system that penetrates all areas of life, even the one that is supposedly supposed to be free of it. There's that famous quote from Herzl, that the rabbis should be left in the synagogues and the generals in the military, so the same thing applies here. Leave the professors in academia and the soldiers in the military. The moment the soldiers enter academia you suddenly feel that “okay, you are part of this regime. You are part of something that serves military power and not academic knowledge or truth” or, you know, all the beautiful words that academia likes to say about itself. Especially in a place called The Faculty of Humanities. What's so humanistic about this military?



Soldiers at the Hebrew University, 2022.

Photo: Melissa Danz

Michal, a Jewish-Israeli undergraduate student at the University of Haifa, describes her experience with weapons and uniforms on campus:

The main concentration of soldiers in uniform that I see are navy uniforms [officer cadet training], they have a program at the University of Haifa, and I see them walking together as a whole group and their presence is very prominent. A whole group of people in identical uniforms, armed, almost all of them always walk around with a weapon on campus and then sometimes you also see them in classrooms, a classroom like that that is full, at least some of the classes they have are only for them so you see a classroom full of soldiers. It also happened to me a few times to see people on campus in civilian clothes, with a pistol in their back pocket. Soldiers in general give me a political red line about the university, something about the presence of soldiers is as if not only are they studying, but the IDF is coming and asserting its presence on campus. It feels to me bigger than just them coming to study in uniform. And a weapon on campus makes me uncomfortable, when there are weapons so close to me, it creates a feeling in me: this is a weapon, it's something that can harm, it's in my space and it creates a feeling of insecurity and discomfort.

Michal then describes another group that carries weapons and evokes insecurity in her:

[There are also] the security guards with the weapons, some carry pistols and some rifles, they don't add to my feeling of security. On the contrary, it adds to the fact that there are firearms on campus. A weapon is a violent thing that doesn't contribute much. I especially feel that they are here to protect the university and they are not here for my benefit. In terms of their interests, I don't feel that they are something that is here to protect me, but something that is here to protect the university as an institution.

The security procedures on academic campuses in Israel are particularly strict, and in many academic institutions there are security guards who carry weapons and sometimes even search the bags of those entering the institution. At the University of Haifa, the security guards carry short rifles. In light of Michal's words, and also in light of testimonies from students at many academic institutions, according to which they are not asked about carrying a weapon when they come to the institution, or are not required to show a valid gun license, and also in light of the fact that soldiers carrying weapons are constantly walking around on campuses, the question arises – are the security guards at academic institutions meant to protect the students and academics at the institution, or is their role limited to protecting the university as an institution?



soldiers outside the Faculty of Humanities at Tel Aviv University, 2023.

Photo: Nissi Peli

Doron, a Jewish-Israeli graduate student in cognitive psychology at the University of Haifa, also describes the military atmosphere on campus:

[I see soldiers in uniform on campus] all the time. Sometimes with a weapon. It bothers me a lot. A lot, a lot, a lot. I think it's something that doesn't create an academic and critical atmosphere and puts academia very much behind, in terms of the fact that a space that has militaristic elements, a space that has violent elements, ultimately causes the society that discusses critical issues to be more silenced, to be less critical, whether it's really in the social sciences and political science where it's the most clear and common but also when you get down to smaller resolutions, I think it's very difficult to express criticism even in the exact sciences. In the end, every field can be political and has its own politics, and the moment there are weapons in space we are in a situation that already feels unequal from the outset, that there is one class against another and all sorts of things like that.

According to Rania, a Palestinian student at the Technion:

It feels disgusting [to see soldiers in uniform on campus]. It feels like... usually when I see soldiers in uniform I feel threatened, even when I'm on campus and I'm supposed to feel safe which is what the Technion usually conveys, but it's not really like that. And they don't really separate it. They think that uniforms are something really normal and are supposed to feel safe for everyone, but they don't. They make me feel threatened, because for me, uniforms are a symbol of the occupation. I think they symbolize occupation and colonialism, they convey sovereignty, control... It makes me feel like I have less of a place in the academic space.

The presence of soldiers also constrains the ability of Palestinian students to express political opinions in the academic space, which is supposedly meant to enable and even encourage open and critical discourse and to give a platform to views that typically have little space elsewhere. Rania describes this:



Soldiers with weapons at Tel Aviv University, 2022.

Photo: Nissi Peli

I also don't feel comfortable expressing political opinions in a Jewish majority, even if they aren't soldiers, so when they are soldiers it's even more complicated and I know that soldiers aren't supposed to express political opinions, but I wouldn't feel comfortable with it. And it's even harder when they are in a military framework, so it feels like they are going to report me or I don't know what. It doesn't feel very comfortable.

CONCLUSION

This sub-chapter reviewed two distinct manifestations of militarism in academic space – the presence of military uniforms and the presence of firearms on academic campuses. As can be seen from a variety of testimonies from students and academics, the presence of weapons and military uniforms in the academic space is perceived as threatening for many and may even cause students to leave courses and drop out of academic programs. This presence also significantly reduces the possibility of free and critical academic discourse and causes students and academics to refrain from expressing themselves freely.

“ENTRY FORBIDDEN BY ORDER”: MILITARY COMPOUNDS

The Eshkol Tower is the central building of the University of Haifa. Until 1989, it was the tallest building in Asia, and until 2002, it maintained the title of the tallest building in Haifa, and in northern Israel in general. Therefore, it is not surprising that the military, allegedly, had a clear interest in using the tower with its broad observation point for its own purposes. During the Gulf War, military forces positioned themselves at the top of the tower and monitored the Haifa Bay.

The tower's floors house, in a hierarchical order, the local academic class scale: on the lower floors, above the lecture halls and library, are the departmental secretariats and lecturers' offices, and on the upper floors are the administrative officials of the university, “with each floor,” writes Professor Ilan Gur-Ze'ev in an article published in the book *'Merhav, Adama, Bayit' (Space, Land, Home)*, “housing individuals with a higher status and more authority than those on the floor below it.”¹¹⁹ On the 12th floor, about a third of the way up the tower, the office of the “Military Programs Coordinator” is located. On the 29th floor, the second most important in the tower hierarchy, the university's senate convenes. This is also the last floor the elevator in the building reaches. To reach the next two floors, one must climb up the building's internal staircase, where locked doors and a sign declaring “ENTRY FORBIDDEN BY ORDER!” can be found. On the 31st floor lies “the invisible floor”, apparently a military base belonging to the Intelligence Corps.

Later in the article, Gur-Ze'ev writes about the alleged intelligence base at the top of the Eshkol Tower at the university:

(Above) all these, the upper floor, the antenna floor, dominates. This is the unmarked, invisible floor, to which everything in the “tower” leads. This is the floor that cannot be ignored when looking at the building from the outside, but no sign inside the “tower” points to it, and no witness from the inside testifies to its existence and its purposes. The unmarked floor is decorated with huge antennas, communication dishes, electronic warfare devices, and apparently dangerous-unspoken radiation, which affects the health of the workers in the “tower” and in the city at its feet; speaking about what is done on the 31st floor,

¹¹⁹ A. Ze'ev, “The 31st Floor: The University Tower and the Zionist Phallogocentrism”, in *Space, Land, Home*, ed. Yehouda Shenhav (Tel Aviv: Van Leer Institute Jerusalem / Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing, 2003), 257–262 (in Hebrew).

or about its very existence, is forbidden to them or avoided by them. On the existing-non-existing floor, life is bustling, reminding those who still need a reminder that even in a postmodern reality, the modern national project, and the military violence entailed by it, do not disappear. Was the “tower” built, in fact, for the sake of the 31st floor, with all the academic activity on the 30 floors subordinate serving merely as an alibi? Or is it just a matter of academic-military coexistence, mobilized for the purpose of Zionist-capitalist control and reproduction under the guise of autonomous scientific inquiry?¹²⁰

The existence of the intelligence base at the top of the Eshkol Tower has never been confirmed, as befits a military intelligence base, but students and faculty members at the University of Haifa are certain of its existence. According to Ariel, a Jewish-Israeli doctoral student in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Haifa:

At the end of the day, you have a university that on the most symbolic level imaginable, there is a floor that no one can get to and no one knows about its existence, but whoever knows, also knows what is there, and that it is an intelligence base. And when you see how the university is built, overlooking the entire area, also the sea and also the city and also all the waves, there is something in it, from a symbolic point of view it's a bit repulsive to think about it. It's a kind of military observation post over the entire area. And it's not just symbolic. It's also very, very real. That is, the intelligence unit sitting there conducts intelligence work and the training programs for soldiers at the university training them on how to control the population, how to fight the population. You know, the university also does this out of lack of choice. It's not that it's only up to it whether it's there or not there. That is, it too is subordinate to this regime. To the governing logic of the state that effectively holds the university. As someone who was also involved in all sorts of student struggles at the university, the struggle of the cleaning workers for example, we were allowed to unionize the cleaning workers, [but] for example, we were forbidden to even get close and talk to the security guards. We were forbidden to get close at all and talk to the security workers. Why, I don't know, they didn't tell us. An excellent question, but I assume it's somehow related to this.

It is difficult to inquire about things related to the Israeli military, and especially to the Intelligence Corps, and therefore even those who are in the tower every day do not know for sure that it is indeed a military base. This is how Ariel describes it:

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

I know that there's a floor that you can't get to and I know that there are active antennas on the roof there. Every now and then they blink, every now and then they change position, when they are turned somewhere. I don't have any absolute knowledge about these things, I have hypotheses based on what I see around me and based on what I hear from people, based on what I see when I look at the roof there. My office is in this tower, I am there almost every day. You almost never see the soldiers inside the tower but you see them when you go outside and suddenly there are all sorts of twenty-year-old kids who come there and they are not students. You see them in the parking lot below, you see them in the cafeteria sometimes. And then they pull out their military ID card to pay. Maybe someone needs to be sent to do a sociological observation of this tower once and see what's happening there. But no one will do that because it is forbidden to investigate these things.

When asked whether he tried to approach the university administration about the problematic nature of the military presence on campus, Ariel says:

I didn't even feel the need to because I know that I'm not the only one it bothers, I know that it also bothers very senior people at the university a lot. I had a feeling from senior people that I wasn't alone in these feelings, so I didn't even have to approach them. Including professors who also taught such students [soldier-students or students with weapons] or who didn't agree to teach such students but had no choice.

According to Doron, a Jewish-Israeli graduate student at the university:

I know that in the distant past it was possible to go up to that floor and today it is not possible. A few days ago I got there and saw that there was a closed door and that you couldn't go any further.

This is also joined by the testimony of Prof. Yuval Yonay, according to which this is not a rumor at all:

There is the Eshkol building, the prominent building of the University of Haifa. At the top of the tower there are military antennas, there is a military compound, this is not a rumor; it is official, known, recognized. A fact.

If a military facility of the intelligence corps indeed exists at the top of the central building of the University of Haifa, it is an extreme example of the militarization of the academic space. If the upper floors of the building are indeed being used by the Israeli military, it is already a matter of actual military operations in the heart of an academic space.

This is not the only case in which the defense establishment used academic space for monitoring and surveillance. In a photo published by Academia for Equality in 2019, police officers are seen on the roof of the “Rabin” building on the Mount Scopus campus of the Hebrew University observing the center of the nearby neighborhood of Issawiya with a large binocular device and a video camera, during a period when severe violence by police officers against the residents of the neighborhood was reported.¹²¹

Another example appears in the response received from the Technion to the free information request we submitted, which included a copy of a contract signed in 2015 between the institution and IAI, according to which the company would install two antennas for receiving raw satellite signals for location purposes, on the roof of the southern stairwell and on the roof of the elevator room of the Rabin building [the building of the Faculty of Civil Engineering] at the university. In addition, it was agreed that IAI would install a cabinet and infrastructure in the communication room located on the 6th floor of the same building [more on this in [Chapter IV: Research Collaboration](#)].

The “National Security Studies Center” (NSSC) is also located at the University of Haifa. It was established in 2000 with the aim of “promoting research and public discourse on Israel's national security issues.” According to the center's website, it “contributes with its research and appearances to the public discourse on national security issues in Israel and has been contributing for many years to the training of senior officials and officers in this field.”¹²² The research group operated by the center deals with “groundbreaking and innovative research fields in security and intelligence.”¹²³ The center also organizes a variety of conferences and events with the participation of senior officials from the Israeli security establishment, past and present, and a glance at the names of the events and participants is enough to get an idea of their content and purpose.¹²⁴ Until a few years ago, the center was managed by Dr. Dan Shiftan, who also previously taught at the military's National Security College and at the Command and Staff College. Over the years, Dr. Shiftan has been quoted for a variety of racist and offensive statements. Among other things, during a course on Israel's conceptions of security in the program for senior executives in diplomacy and security at Tel Aviv University (which was also attended by senior military and Mossad officials) he said that “when Israel sends a sophisticated satellite into space, the Arabs come out with a new kind of hummus,” and during other lectures, statements such as: “The Arabs are the greatest failure in the history of the human race, there is nothing more messed up under the sun than the Palestinians”; “The Iran-Iraq War was, in the words of

¹²¹ See Academia for Equality's [Facebook post](#) from December 21, 2019 (in Hebrew).

¹²² [“The Center”](#), The National Security Studies Center at the University of Haifa (in Hebrew).

¹²³ [“Mission and Objectives”](#), The National Security Studies Center at the University of Haifa (in Hebrew).

¹²⁴ [“Conferences”](#), The National Security Studies Center at the University of Haifa (in Hebrew).

Hannah Szenes, 'My God, my God, may it never end.' Seven years of pure pleasure"; "In the entire Arab world they shoot at weddings to prove that they have at least one thing that is hard and working that is capable of shooting"; and "The Palestinians are an ugly part of the Middle East, let's leave these choleras."¹²⁵ At a conference of Im Tirtzu, which he attended (along with right-wing figures and members of the Knesset past and present Sharron Haskel, Yinon Magal, and Nir Barkat), Dr. Schiffan said that "our neighbor for the foreseeable future will be violent, irresponsible, dissolute people, who from time to time break out. Because that's what they do."¹²⁶ Presenting the case of Dr. Schiffan and examples of his public statements (some of which were made while lecturing at academic institutions) are important because they provide evidence of the perceptions and type of discourse promoted by the person who until recently headed one of the largest academic-military research centers, and whose events are attended by senior military officials.

According to Ariel:

There is a place for this [academic research focusing on security and military issues] but not the way it is done today. If it were really separated from the security establishment then there would be a place for it. If there was really a possibility to research the security establishment and the issue of security in the country in general, outside the military, outside this system, then we would get to completely different things, to completely different research results from what we get today which is basically the military and the system researching itself. Not critically. The criticism is fiction. There was some general who introduced all sorts of Deleuzian methods into military training, like, 'oh, we have a wall, so it's as if there is no wall. Just go through it.' It didn't help them much. But these are the breakthroughs that these institutes know how to make. Wall breakthroughs that they call breakthroughs. This whole story is quite nauseating.¹²⁷

If centers for "security" research were indeed to research topics related to security objectively and independently from the military, their existence in academic institutions could perhaps be justified. But as long as their role is to serve the needs of the military and the security establishment as a whole, while avoiding critique of its doctrines and actions, they have no place in civilian academic spaces.

¹²⁵ Sarah Dar-Libovitz, "[Senior Lecturer: 'The Arabs – The Failure of Humanity'](#)", *nrg*, October 21, 2019 (in Hebrew).

¹²⁶ Im Tirtzu, "[Prof. Dan Schiffan Explaining Arab Terror](#)", June 21, 2018, Facebook video (in Hebrew).

¹²⁷ For further reading on the military's attempts to apply postmodern philosophy to its combat and occupation strategies, see Eyal Weizman's [Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation](#) (London: Verso, 2007).

CONCLUSION

This chapter reviewed the different ways in which the militarization of academia in Israel is expressed in the academic space. The first part of the chapter presented testimonies from students and academics regarding the presence of military uniforms and firearms on campus, and how these exclude students and academics and compromise their sense of security. The second part of this chapter reviewed a number of cases in which academic spaces were used for military purposes.

For the responses of the academic institutions and the Council for Higher Education to the claims presented in the report, see [Appendix of Responses](#).

CHAPTER III

STUDENTS

This chapter examines how militaristic processes in academia affect students. It is composed of two parts: the first focuses on various phenomena of student recruitment to the defense establishment and the military industry on academic campuses, while the second examines the phenomena of discrimination in the admission process for academic studies and student housing.

“HEADHUNTING”: RECRUITMENT FOR THE SECURITY ESTABLISHMENT AND THE MILITARY INDUSTRY

The fair will include, among others, representatives from the “Mossad” and the Shin Bet [ISA], with the goal of ‘headhunting’ [students] relevant for their organizations.¹²⁸

An advertisement for Ben-Gurion University's career fair on the university's website

There are symbiotic relationships between us and the Technion. 70% of the engineers at Rafael are Technion graduates. Our connection with academia is indispensable.¹²⁹

Dr. Ronny Postman, Senior Vice President for Research and Development at Rafael and a lecturer at the Technion

As shown in [Chapter I](#), academic institutions directly collaborate with the recruitment of youth and students to the military, state security agencies, and the military-industrial sector by managing, marketing and promoting military-academic study programs and by hosting conferences and events for the security establishment and the military industry. This subchapter elaborates on the practice of recruitment on campuses.

According to Dr. Matar, academic institutions take an active part in recruitment for militaristic bodies and companies in additional ways:

There are two clear forms of recruitment [on campus]: one is at the employment fair, where they set up [booths], and the second, which is even more problematic in my opinion, is an employment event that the Shin Bet [ISA] organizes with the university [Tel Aviv University]. There is someone at the university who is responsible for such training, and it is a special day exclusively for the Shin Bet. They invite people to a recruitment event for the Shin Bet on campus. Once we [Academia for Equality] approached them about this, and they said, ‘We organize for all sorts of companies that approach us, and the Shin Bet approached us, so we organized something like this for them.

¹²⁸ [“Israel Aerospace Industries Will Unveil a New Concept at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Career Fair”](#), Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, June 1, 2014 (in Hebrew)

¹²⁹ Amir Teig and Inbal Orpaz, [“Missiles with Profit Targets | Rafael’s Secrets – Israel’s National Laboratory – Revealed”](#), *TheMarker*, November 28, 2014 (in Hebrew).

In other words, the university's response to the inquiry by Academia for Equality indicates that the university is trying to depoliticize an organization that is in fact not only political, but also racist and violent, and by doing so, participates in the normalization of institutional violence.

Employment fairs are held annually on many academic campuses across the country and are organized and managed by the academic institutions themselves. These fairs are attended by both state security bodies, such as the ISA and the Mossad, and public and private companies in the military industry. For example, at the technological employment fair held at Smolarz Auditorium at Tel Aviv University in 2023, participating bodies included, among others: the Mossad, the ISA, Rafael, Elbit, Israel Aerospace Industries (hereunder IAI) and Check Point. The Ben-Gurion University employment fair in 2023 also hosted military, national-security bodies and military-industry companies, including: the Center for Cyber Education, the Air Force's Construction Division, the Nuclear Research Center-Negev (hereunder KMG), the ISA, Check Point, and IAI.¹³⁰ Three years earlier, the following participated in the university's employment fair: Rafael, IAI, Elbit, MORPHISEC (cyber), and the KMG.¹³¹ At the Hebrew University's career fair in 2022, Elbit and the Mossad also came to recruit.¹³² The “Coffee Chats 2019” events held at Reichman University were attended by the Mossad and the military's Intelligence Division.¹³³ The employment fair held at the university in 2022 was attended by the ISA and the Mossad.¹³⁴



A recruitment booth of the Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet) at the 2023 employment fair at Tel Aviv University.

Photo: Nissi Peli

¹³⁰ Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, [Career Fair Booklet 2023](#), May 2023 (in Hebrew).

¹³¹ Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, [Career Fair booklet 2020](#), website (in Hebrew).

¹³² [“Career Fair Week 2022”](#), Center for Career Development at the Hebrew University website (in Hebrew).

¹³³ [“Career Fair”](#), Reichman University Career Center website (in Hebrew).

¹³⁴ Asher Atadgi, [“Amdocs, Teva, the Shin Bet and Mossad: Career Fair for Hundreds of Students in Herzliya”](#), *Herzliya MyNet*, May 11, 2022 (in Hebrew).



A recruitment booth of the Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet) at the 2023 employment fair at Tel Aviv University.

Photo: Nissi Peli



Invitation advertisement for a recruitment event by Elbit Systems Ltd., in collaboration with Tel Aviv University, published on the Facebook page of the Tel Aviv University Industry Fellows organization, 2019.



Invitation advertisement for a recruitment event by Elbit Systems Ltd., in collaboration with Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, published on the Facebook page of the Career Development Center at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2021.

According to Aviv, a Jewish-Israeli computer science undergraduate student at Tel Aviv University, there are also courses offered in collaboration with arms companies:

There's a course that was actually developed in partnership with Elbit where, and participants are required to sign in advance that all of its outputs are the intellectual property of Elbit, not of the students. Often they present their final projects at all sorts of weapons exhibitions, like the one near the university, at the Expo [complex].¹³⁵

An example of a course like the one Aviv describes is the Innobit program, which was jointly built by Elbit's "C4I and Cyber" division, the Faculty of Engineering at Tel Aviv University, and the Tel Aviv University Innovation Center. According to the program's website, its goals include "enabling the student to understand a development process composed of a number of disciplines and which tangibly simulates a technological development process in the industry." The program then describes Elbit's "C4I and Cyber" division as the branch responsible for the research and development of "groundbreaking products including distributed digital battle management systems [GDA], unmanned vehicles, advanced ad-hoc communication systems, advanced and distributed sensing systems, Cyber, Augmented Reality, tactical computers, wearable sensors, etc." – or, in short, weapons systems. The reference to "distributed digital battle management systems" (DGA) is the "Digital Ground Army" program, a control and command program of the Israeli army's ground forces that combines advanced technologies used by combat units on the battlefield. Elbit is then described as a company that develops "airborne, ground, and naval systems, UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicles], control and command systems, communication, computers, and intelligence, electro-optical systems" and boasts of being "the largest defense industry in Israel and ranked 26th in the world." The students who participate in the program are jointly selected by Tel Aviv University and Elbit. At the end of the program, each student must develop a project that will be considered their final project in the academic curriculum.¹³⁶ In 2020, the chosen final project theme was "drones."

¹³⁵ Aviv refers to the [ISDEF](#), the largest annual arms expo in Israel, held at Expo Tel Aviv, a fairgrounds complex located near Tel Aviv University. According to its website, the fair attracts a "diverse" audience of "government officials, military personnel, law enforcement agencies, and industry professionals." The arms companies participating in these fairs often market their products as "battle tested", usually meaning they've been used by the security establishment on Palestinians. As an [NPR article](#) describing the most recent fair (April 2025) notes, "Israel has revealed new technology it deployed in Gaza and other battlefields in the last two years of war, and a laser it will begin to deploy to intercept missiles."

¹³⁶ "[Innobit Project](#)", Iby and Aladar Fleischman Faculty of Engineering, Tel Aviv University (in Hebrew).



Image text: *The Shin Bet is looking for people who seek meaning.” The Career Guidance Unit and IAESTE at the Technion, together with the Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet), invite you to participate in a “Spotlight Day” on the topic of the Shin Bet and career paths.*

Invitation advertisement for a recruitment event by the Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet), in collaboration with the Technion.

Another example of a program managed in collaboration with the military industry is “Future [Women] Engineers,” a joint initiative of Tel Aviv University and IAI. The university boasts about the program on its “Women Empowerment at Tel Aviv University” page, noting that the program is managed “under the leadership of the Dean of Students of Tel Aviv University.”¹³⁷ As part of the project, 11 women students from the fields of engineering, exact sciences, life sciences, and medicine are chosen to guide and mentor 100 middle school girls from across the country. During the program, the girls meet with the students, take part in “inspiring meetings with mentors from Israel Aerospace Industries [IAI], a visit to Israel Aerospace Industries, and a visit to campus.” The program has a full recruitment page on *ynet*, featuring a banner reading: “Israel Aerospace Industries launches the 'Future Engineers' initiative for 9th-grade girls.”¹³⁸ The uniqueness of this program lies in its dual recruitment – both of the students, whom IAI certainly hopes to recruit later, and of the teenage girls, who are participating in a program run by an arms company, likely without being fully aware of it. Programs of this kind also enable military industry companies to whitewash their actions by creating ostensibly “social” projects.¹³⁹

Eli, a Jewish-Israeli student at the University of Haifa, describes the career fair on campus:

There's a ZIM booth, a Rafael booth, an Intel booth, an Elbit booth. They don't hide anything; they simply [say], ‘here are your options: serve capital or serve the military [and] the military industry.’

¹³⁷ “Women’s Empowerment at Tel Aviv University”, Dean of Student Success, *Tel Aviv University* (in Hebrew).

¹³⁸ “Future Women Engineers 6”, *Ynet*, in collaboration with Israel Aerospace Industries, August 6, 2023 (in Hebrew).

¹³⁹ See [DIMSE’s page on Israel Aerospace Industries](#) [IAI] (in English).



Image text: *Satellites, UAVs, and missiles – a journey from dream to reality.*

Advertisement for an IAI “Spotlight Day,” held in collaboration with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, [published on the Facebook page of “Computer Science and Engineering – The Hebrew University.”](#)

Military-industry companies invest significant resources in recruiting students to their ranks and enlisting academic institutions to support this goal. Indeed, as Eyal noted, they do not need to conceal their intention at all. For example, on its website, IAI boasts about a “women student internship program,” titled “Women Engineers for Industry” and described as a “unique project in collaboration with leading universities – Ben-Gurion University, the Hebrew University, Tel Aviv University, and the Technion.” Its stated goal being “to promote outstanding women students in technological professions by providing scholarships and funding for training, integrating them into Israel Aerospace Industries during the advanced years of their degree, and employing them full-time after graduation.”¹⁴⁰ In practice, as can be understood from IAI’s stated intentions, this is a program designed to recruit students under the guise of a scholarship.

Further down IAI’s page, additional recruitment events carried out in collaboration with academia are described under the heading “University Recruitment Fairs”:

To reach the widest, but also the most precise, variety of potential employees, we hold recruitment events throughout the year that will expose as many relevant people as possible to our being a fascinating and innovative technological home, already during their studies. Among the activities we invite you to be part of are: university opening-of-the-year events, recruitment fairs, spotlight days with the participation of leading engineers who expose unique projects, professional tours of the company, hackathons, meetups, and more.

¹⁴⁰ [“Students”](#), Israel Aerospace Industries (in Hebrew).

But that's not all. Under the heading “Completing Final Projects at Israel Aerospace Industries,” the company writes:

Israel Aerospace Industries is committed to integrating students into the job market in their final year of studies through a final project. Students join existing projects at the company and complete their final project with us under the close guidance of first-rate engineers who mentor the project, provide in-depth knowledge and learning, and integrate them into practical work in their field of study. Many of the students continue to develop their career with us afterward and grow in the company. This is an opportunity to learn, develop, and make an impact in a large company with meaning and technological challenges. Interested in conducting your final project with us? Leave your details on the “Contact Us” page, and we will be happy to assess your suitability.

From this description, it appears that academic institutions allow students in various departments to perform their final academic projects at military industry companies, a form of collaboration that also provides these companies with another channel to recruit students into their ranks.

The same applies to the following paragraph on the same page, under the heading “Collaboration with the Faculties of Engineering”:

Almost all Israel Aerospace Industries employees are graduates of the leading academic institutions and academic programs in Israel. Precisely for this reason, we see great importance in maintaining the connection between our people and our work and the advanced academic community in the country. As part of our deep and ongoing relationship with them, and out of a belief that this feedback loop and connection with academia creates added value for both sides, enriching creativity and technological developments at Israel Aerospace Industries in particular and in Israel in general, we support academic institutions and take part in a variety of activities, ranging from professional tours of the company, lectures, and study days, to hackathons.

In the last paragraph on the page titled “Israel Aerospace Industries–Academia” the *Atidim LaTa'asiya* (Futures for Industry) program is described. This is a military academic reserve program aimed at recruiting youth “from developing towns in the periphery, and from a low socioeconomic background,” for whom the company and the military pay to “cover the student's needs during the study period.” The company then boasts that “most of the students have already completed their studies and are working as engineers on leading projects at Israel Aerospace Industries.”



Recruitment booth of IAI at the Technion Technology Employment Fair, 2022.



Recruitment booth of the Mossad at the Technion Technology Employment Fair, 2022.

According to Rania, a Palestinian student at the Technion:

In the Faculty of Aerospace Engineering at the Technion, there isn't a single Arab student in the undergraduate program. They [the faculty] collaborate with Rafael and Israel Aerospace Industries. And I also had many more left-leaning friends who didn't go there even though they wanted to study aerospace engineering. This is also because in Israel most of the employment [in these fields] is at Rafael and Israel Aerospace Industries. It's not that they don't accept Arabs, but Arabs prefer not to go there in the first place. I had one Palestinian friend who did go there and studied, but afterward he went to Germany and built a career there. Also, at the end of every semester, they hold an employment where students can submit their resumes, and you can really see the presence of Rafael, Israel Aerospace Industries, all sorts of cyber and information security companies... And they really broadcast what they do, they talk about what they do, they put up signs for cyber security and that... The Technion supposedly takes an apolitical stance, but it's not really apolitical; apolitical basically means going along with the mainstream. And I think that the military is the most political thing there is, and they constantly try to distance it from politics, but it is actually so political. The truth is, when I see Rafael, I'm just really taken aback. This

also makes things difficult to a certain extent; if I want to work and submit a resume, I have to really consider it, and not all the options are open to me. Even if I wanted to, say, submit a resume to Rafael, I don't think they would accept me. But I wouldn't want that. And most of the booths at the Technion are very militaristic. I think there was also a Mossad booth.



Recruitment advertisement by Rafael - Advanced Defense Systems Ltd., [published on the Facebook page of the Career Development Center, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.](#)



Rafael - Advanced Defense Systems Ltd. booth at the Technion Career Fair.

Photo: Stav Berman.

Rania's words clarify two more problematic aspects of academic-military cooperation in recruiting students for military industry companies: the fact that for many in academia, these options are not open at all, and that this military-academic cooperation deters students from studying in these departments due to their opposition to the military-industrial-academic collaborations.

It is also worth mentioning that until 2016, the ISA demanded that Israeli universities provide it with lists of their graduates, along with their ID numbers and contact details, so that the organization could try to recruit them.¹⁴¹ It was only after the *Association for Civil Rights* in Israel appealed to the legal advisor of the ISA that the organization ceased this practice.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Haim Levinson and Revital Hovel, "[Universities Provide the Shin Bet with Lists of Graduates Containing Identifying Information](#)", *Haaretz*, June 11, 2015 (in Hebrew).

¹⁴² "[The Shin Bet in Response to the Association: We Will No Longer Demand Graduate Lists from Universities](#)", The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, March 14, 2016 (in Hebrew).

There are also examples of protest actions taken against the participation of military-industry companies in campus employment fairs. One such protest took place during the Tel Aviv university technological career fair in 2023, where activists and students set up a fictitious stand for a weapons company they named “IKI – Israel Killing Industries – Israel's Murderous Industry Ltd.” The activists handed out flyers about the made up company and spoke with many students, sharing information about human rights violations committed by the fictional company, as well as human rights violations carried out with weapons and technologies developed and sold by real weapons companies that participated in the academic employment fair.¹⁴³ Among other things, the activists distributed the following flyer to students at the fair:



From the Facebook page
["حموشيم Hamushim חמושים"](#)

IKI גאים להשתתף ביריד הקריירה הטכנולוגי באוני-תל-אביב כדי לגייס את המוחות הטובים ביותר לפיתוח הנשקים הרצחניים ביותר בעולם.

בין השאר חילקנו סוכריות על מקל ומערכות פריצה לפלאפונים למי שהגישה קורות חיים לIKI.

קצת מידע על החברה:

IKI מפתחת כבר 75 שנים פתרונות צבאיים קטלניים בכל הזירות ובכל העולם.

שילוב "יחודי" של:

- יוצאי צבא (גנרלים, יחידות קומנדו, לוחמי סייבר ואנשי מודיעין)
- מעבדת הניסויים הגדולה בעולם עם גישה למיליוני ניסויים באש חיה - עזה והגדה המערבית.
- ניסיון מבצעי רב בכל הזירות של ישראל - בעיקר בהתקפות על עזה ולבנון.
- לנשק של IKI אחוז הצלחה של 100% בפגיעה במטרות (0 שורדים).

אם זה רדיפה של מיעוט מסוכן ואכזר (כמו הרוהינגה במיאנמר או המפגינים המסוכנים בהונג קונג) או כליאה והרג של עיתונאים ופעילי זכויות אדם שמסכנים את הממשל הצבאי של הלקוחות שלנו - אנחנו דואגים למצוא להם את הפתרון המושלם כדי להמשיך למשול, לשלוט ולדכא בני אדם. החברה מייצאת לכ-130 מדינות בכל העולם. בין המדינות שכבר לקוחות של החברה: ברזיל, קניה, אזרבייג'ן, דרום סודאן, מיאנמר, אינדונזיה, בנגלדש, רוסיה, בלארוס, פיליפינים, תאילנד, קולומביה, קזחסטן, הודו ועוד הרבה.

אחד מתחומי הליבה שלנו הוא אספקת כלי טייס רצחניים במיוחד. למשל המל"טים המתאבדים שלנו תוכננו כפלטפורמות רב-משימתיות שמתאימות לצרכי לקוחות מקומיים ובינלאומיים - אם זה הפצצת בניין שלם ללא השראת ניצולים בעזה או הרג המוני של צבאות ומיעוטים - המל"טים שלנו לא יפספסו אף פעם את המטרה.

אנו אחת מחברות הביטחונות וטכנולוגיות הגדולות בישראל ובמשך שנות הפעילות תרמנו תרומה מکرעת לעוצמתה הכלכלית של ישראל ולכיבוש הישראלי בשטחים.

אז בואו תצטרפו לארגון מבוסס, יציב, ציוני, אכזרי וחכם.

אנו נותנים לעובדינו את הפלטפורמה להתפתח, ללמוד ולצמוח במגוון תחומים. אם זה בללמוד איך לפתח את הנשק הקטלני הבא שיהיה גאוה ישראלית וישתלב בפשעים נגד האנושות, או בלהשתלב בתכנות של טכנולוגיות המעקב הבאה שכל העולם ישתמש בה כדי לעקוב אחרי להט"בים ופעילי זכויות אדם (מסוכנים ונתעבים). לשמיים ולכמות הקורבנות אין גבול בIKI.

לא בטוחים איזו משרה הכי מתאימה לכם?
 שלחו את קורות החיים שלכם ואנחנו ניצור איתכם קשר במידה ונמצא משרה מתאימה.

שלחו מייל ל:

WeHireStudents@IsraelKillingIndustries.com

¹⁴³ Hamushim, ["Israel Killing Industries Recruited Students in Tel Aviv University"](#), January 16, 2023 (in Hebrew).

Discussions held between the activists and students revealed that many of the latter were either completely unaware or only partially aware of the products developed by the arms companies at the fair, which countries their products are sold to, and how they are used to violate human rights in Israel, the occupied territories, the Gaza Strip, and around the world. The students' reactions to the action amplifies the necessity of accessible and reliable information regarding the activities of military industry companies, information that would allow students to make an informed decision, based on their conscience, about whether they wish to work for these companies.

CONCLUSION

This subchapter reviewed various phenomena of student recruitment for the military, other state security agencies and the military industry on academic campuses. As shown, these bodies and companies invest tremendous efforts in recruiting students into their ranks, with the full cooperation of academic institutions, and that student recruitment is not limited to setting up booths for weapons companies and bodies such as the Mossad and the ISA at academic employment fairs, but also includes collaborations in academic courses, scholarships, and even the development of technologies and weapons within the academic framework.

These phenomena shed light on another significant aspect of the militarization processes in academic institutions: the choice of institutions to take an active part in recruiting for military bodies and companies, many of whose work is dedicated to maintaining the occupation, espionage and surveillance, and the development of weapons that are then sold to countries that use them against innocent people. This is a moral stain that clearly contradicts the (supposed) role of academia, or at least its self-image.

“LEADERSHIP SKILLS”: DISCRIMINATION BASED ON NON-MILITARY SERVICE IN ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS AND STUDENT HOUSING

This subchapter focuses on the phenomena of discrimination against prospective students and students who have not served in the military or who have not completed full military service, in the admission processes for academic studies and student housing. This will be illustrated through several examples of application forms for academic institutions in Israel, and from the lists of eligibility criteria for student housing as they appear on the websites of academic institutions.

ADMISSION TO ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

Whenever asked about the issue, academic institutions in Israel have claimed that they do not discriminate in the admission process for academic studies against candidates who have not served in the military – whether those who were not called for service in the first place (as is the case for most Palestinians and Ultra-religious Jews) or those whom the military exempted before enlistment or during their service. Despite these claims, many academic institutions’ registration forms require applicants to provide details about their military service, and if they have not completed it, to specify the reason for their exemption. Over the years, the academic institutions have claimed that the information regarding candidates’ military service is intended for purposes such as awarding scholarships and providing benefits to discharged soldiers. However, beyond the fact that it is impossible to verify that these are indeed the only reasons, it is unclear why the institutions then require candidates to state the reason for their exemption. It is important to note that, by law, academic institutions are not allowed to discriminate against candidates for not having served in the military.

Nevertheless, as mentioned in previous publications by New Profile, there are cases where this can indeed harm a candidate's chances of acceptance, such as in the case of medical study programs:

There are departments in the university, such as medicine, that as part of the screening process require a personal interview where the topic [of military service] can come up. In such cases, if you [a candidate] get the “wrong” interviewer, and if you can't convince them that the reason for which you received a mental health exemption is behind you – a mental health Profile 21 can hurt your chances of acceptance.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ [“Who’s Afraid of Profile 21?”](#), New Profile (in Hebrew).

A check conducted by the *Haaretz* in 2020 revealed that Tel Aviv University requires applicants to provide details about their military service, and if they received an exemption, to specify the reason for the exemption. Following *Haaretz's* inquiry to the university, the latter committed to making the military service section optional.¹⁴⁵ However, a review conducted by New Profile a year later, following a number of inquiries sent to us from applicants to Tel Aviv University who feared that disclosing their non-service or the reason for their military exemption could negatively affect their chances of admission, revealed that the university still requires applicants (for all degree levels – from undergraduates to doctoral) to complete this section:

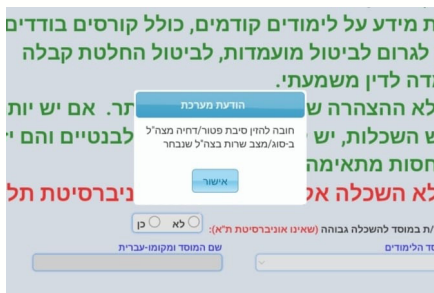


Image text: System message: You must enter a reason for exemption/deferment from the IDF in the selected service type/status [section].

From the university application form on Tel Aviv University's website.

Following a request we made to *Haaretz*, the newspaper contacted the university, and the university committed to removing the section from the application forms.¹⁴⁶ However, as of 2023, the military service section still appeared in the registration pages for applicants:¹⁴⁷

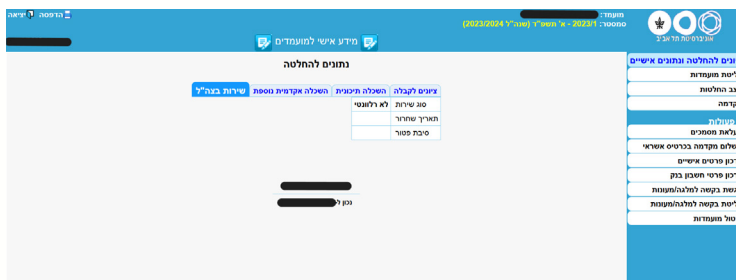


Image text: Under the heading *Decision Data* (regarding an applicant's admission), the field *IDF Service* appears, with subfields for *Type of Service*, *Date of Discharge*, and *Exemption Reasons*.

From the "Personal Information for Applicants" page on Tel Aviv University's website.

¹⁴⁵ Shira Kadari-Ovadia, "Tel Aviv University Required Applicants to Explain Why They Were Discharged from the IDF" *Haaretz*, February 5, 2020 (in Hebrew).

¹⁴⁶ Shira Kadari-Ovadia, "Despite Its Commitment, Tel Aviv University Continues to Require Applicants to Explain Why They Were Discharged from the IDF", *Haaretz*, November 4, 2021 (in Hebrew).

¹⁴⁷ According to information we received in 2025, the section has been removed.

Similarly, applicants to the University of Haifa are also required to complete a section regarding their military service, as shown in the screenshot from the institution's application form:

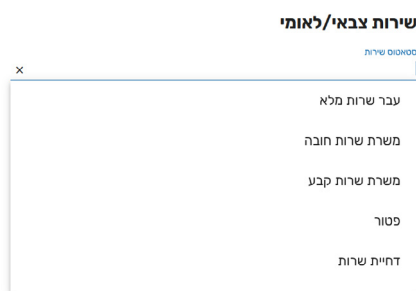


Image text: Candidates are required to select their “Military/National Service” Status from the list: *Completed full service/Active compulsory service/Active career service/Exemption / Service deferment.*

From the university application form on Haifa University’s website.¹⁴⁸

At Ben-Gurion University as well, applicants are required to complete a section regarding their military service, as shown in the following screenshot:



Image text: Candidates are required to fill this section inquiring about their military service, and have to share with the university the following information: *Military/National service status; Recruitment/National Service start and end dates; Reason for military exemption [if relevant].*

From the university application form on Ben-Gurion University’s website.

The same is true at the Hebrew University:

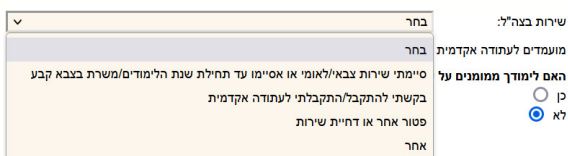


Image text: Candidates are required to provide the university with information regarding their military service, and select their status from the following list: *I’ve completed my military/national service or will complete it by the beginning of the coming academic year/I’m in career service; I applied/was accepted to the Academic Reserve [track]; Other exemption/deferred service; Other.*

From the university application form on the Hebrew University’s website.

¹⁴⁸ There is a common misconception that Israeli youth can freely choose between military service and national civilian service; in reality, youth can volunteer for a one or two year long national service only if the military grants them an exemption. The national service system in Israel is itself deeply flawed, but this issue is beyond the scope of this report.

Information we received in September 2023 indicated that the Wingate Academic College also required applicants to specify the medical reasons for their exemption, as evident in its application form:

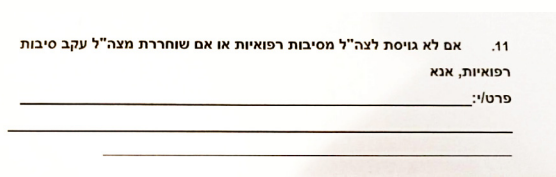


Image text: *If you weren't drafted to the IDF for medical reasons or if you were exempted from service due to medical reasons, please elaborate.*

A picture of a section from the application form to the Wingate institute.

Furthermore, an applicant to the college testified to us that the form was returned to them because they did not fill out this section.

It should be noted that the checks were conducted in 2023, and things may have changed since then.

On the application page for studies at Reichman University, under 'Special Admission Categories,' the following admission track appears:

Reichman University will admit candidates based on proven leadership skills: service members and veterans of the security forces and those with leadership skills from development towns and rehabilitation neighborhoods [...] This category is intended for IDF officers who performed combat service or women officers who served as combatants and combat supporters, with at least one year of permanent service. In addition, candidates may apply under this category if they served in a special unit ([e.g.] Sayeret Matkal, Shayetet, Shaldag) for at least 5 years (compulsory + permanent [service]).

A critical question: why are “leadership skills” a condition for admission to academic studies at all? And can leadership skills only be judged based on military service? Is the above-mentioned “leadership” style – built within a framework of power and intended to create obedience, issue commands, and refrain from asking questions or providing criticism – the kind of leadership we want to see in civilian spaces?

ADMISSION TO STUDENT HOUSING

In many cases, student housing admission also gives preference to students who have served or are still serving in the military. The admission process for student housing at most academic institutions in Israel is based on accumulating points according to criteria set by the academic institution, with those scoring the highest gaining a place in

the student housing. Typically, these criteria include financial situation, distance from home to the academic institution, academic achievements, and so on. In many cases, there are also criteria related to military and reserve service. These criteria discriminate against students who have not served in the military for various reasons, as well as entire population groups (notably Palestinian citizens of Israel and ultra-religious Jews), many of whom are not called for military service in the first place.

For example, in the criteria for accumulating points for eligibility for student housing at the University of Haifa, the following two criteria appear:

- **Military service:** military/national/academic reserve service. Valid for 5 years from the date of discharge and throughout all years of the degree.
- **Reserve service:** additional points will be given to a student who served 10 consecutive days of reserve duty or 21 cumulative days of reserve duty in the academic year 2022-2023.¹⁴⁹

Similar criteria also appear in the eligibility conditions for student housing at Tel Aviv University [emphasis in the original]:

- **Service in the IDF/National Service** or service in a body recognized by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services for the purpose of national service
- **Reserve service performed in the last year:** starting from the 5th day¹⁵⁰

A stricter criterion appears on the website of Bar-Ilan University:

Proof of national service or military service must be presented.¹⁵¹

This subchapter reviewed university application forms and the eligibility criteria for student housing in a small number of academic institutions (including major universities), in order to illustrate the phenomenon in which academic institutions require applicants to provide information about their military service, its duration, and, if they were not conscripted or were exempted before completing full compulsory service, the reason for the exemption granted by the military. In the case of admission to student housing, it was

¹⁴⁹ [“Registration and Admission Conditions”](#), Dean of Students Office, University of Haifa (in Hebrew).

¹⁵⁰ [“Applying for Student Housing”](#), Financial Assistance Department, Dean of Students Office, Tel Aviv University (in Hebrew).

¹⁵¹ [“Student Dormitories”](#), Pre-Academic Preparatory Program, Unit for Special Programs, Bar-Ilan University (in Hebrew).

shown that various academic institutions consider military service and reserve service as criteria that award additional points toward eligibility for housing. Thus, in the case of student housing, many academic institutions give preference to those who served in the military or are still in active reserve duty, thereby discriminating against those who have not served in the military, whether they were not called up for conscription in the first place or received an exemption from the military. This is in addition to the automatic eligibility for student housing offered by numerous military-academic programs, as shown in chapter I, or as in the case of programs such as Havatzalot, which allocate entire student housing buildings exclusively to soldier-students, turning them into de facto military bases.

Discrimination in admission to student housing against those who have not served in the military excludes those who did not enlist or did not complete their military service due to a variety of reasons, some of which the very reasons due to which they need student housing most, including poverty and violence in their parents' home that affected their mental state.¹⁵² Denying these individuals the access to student housing may prevent them from studying in academia altogether, since they would have to work alongside their studies in order to pay full rent. This is in addition to Palestinians and other groups whom the military does not enlist in the first place. By discriminating against them and preferencing military veterans and active reservists in the allocation of student housing, academic institutions further deepen inequality in civil society and push marginalized groups out of higher education.

The examples presented in this subchapter provide further evidence of militaristic practices that exclude from the academic sphere those who do not align themselves with military values, and especially those who did not serve in the military. The requirement by academic institutions that applicants provide information about their military service (or lack thereof), or the reason for their exemption, on application forms is, to say the least, highly problematic. It raises concerns of discrimination against applicants who did not serve in the military, or whose reason for exemption may be viewed unfavorably by the academic institutions.

¹⁵² *Translator's Note:* The Israeli military pays soldiers in compulsory service a considerably low wage, far below the minimum wage in Israel. Some youths from low socioeconomic backgrounds seek exemption from military service in order to work and support or provide for their families; Others are the main caretakers of their sick or disabled family members. New Profile's Counseling Network accompanies many of these individuals in their exemption process. As opposed to the classical (and conservative) leftist conception of refusal as a public and heroic act, we see every choice to not join the military as a political act—one of refusal. Not only that many of these youths were not exposed to radical politics at a young age in order to refuse, but refusal also puts them at risk of alienation from their communities; in addition, imprisonment due to public or pronounced refusal may put many groups at risk, including individuals with physical and mental conditions, LGBTQA+ individuals, and those who need to provide or take care of their family.

Even if the claims made by Tel Aviv University and Ben-Gurion University, for example, are true – namely, that requesting information about applicants’ military service (or lack thereof) is driven by statistical needs or by the need to assess eligibility for benefits granted to those who served – academic institutions have alternative ways to obtain such information that do not raise concerns about improper discrimination and do not deter prospective students who did not serve from applying to academic institutions. If institutions do in fact need this information, there are several other methods to collect it: for instance, by sending voluntary questionnaires to students after they have already been admitted, for statistical purposes, or by sending them a letter explaining the various criteria for financial support during their studies (and, ideally, not providing special treatment and financial support based on students’ military service).

In recent years, New Profile has received inquiries from university applicants who indicated that military service sections on application forms have caused them anxiety, fearing that their non-service would harm their chances of admission.

Including such sections in application forms reinforces a widespread belief that not serving in the military has far-reaching consequences in civilian life. This belief is actively maintained by the military, which helps circulate myths about the supposed consequences that non-service has on civilian life, including discrimination in hiring processes and in applications to universities, and an inability to obtain a driver's license or the cancellation of an existing license. These myths are disseminated to deter people from seeking exemptions from military service. Most of them have long been debunked, yet the decision by academic institutions to include questions about military service on application forms ultimately serves the military’s interests and raises concerns that these institutions discriminate against applicants who did not serve or were exempted. It is reasonable to assume that similar practices exist in additional academic institutions beyond those reviewed above, both in eligibility criteria for student housing and in application forms, and a more extensive examination of this phenomenon will be required in future reports.

Once again, these phenomena show that the militarization of civilian spaces and institutions extends far beyond its most visible manifestations (such as the presence of weapons and military uniforms on campuses) and affects nearly every aspect of civilian life that it penetrates. A civilian space that claims for human diversity and the possibility of open and critical discourse cannot simultaneously employ militaristic practices that exclude so many people.

For the responses of the academic institutions and the Council for Higher Education to the claims in the report, see the [appendix of responses](#).

CHAPTER VI

RESEARCH COLLABORATION

This chapter examines research collaborations between academic institutions, the defense establishment and the military industry. It includes information obtained from several academic institutions through freedom of information requests submitted under the Freedom of Information law, as well as additional information collected through research based on open sources.

“BASIC SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY”: MILITARY-ACADEMIC RESEARCH

*Military research and development in Israel would not exist without the universities. They perform all the basic scientific inquiry, which is then developed by the defense industries or the military.*¹⁵³

Prof. Isaac Ben-Israel, former head of the Security Studies Program at Tel Aviv University and of the Yuval Ne'eman Workshop for Science, Technology and Security. Prior to that, he served as head of the DDR&D, in addition to a variety of other military roles.

Another layer of the cooperation between academia in Israel, the defense establishment and the military industry lies in the conduct of joint research, as well as research conducted by the institutions independently but commissioned by military bodies. While the cooperation in recruitment, discussed earlier in the report (see [“Headhunting”](#) in Chapter III) is somewhat more visible and explicit, and evidence of the “headhunting” of students is relatively easy to find, research collaborations often remain confidential, and information about them is only rarely made public.

Tel Aviv University’s official motto is “Pursuing the Unknown.” Indeed, this slogan also appears, both in Hebrew and in English, on either side of the page at the top of the university’s response letter to the Freedom of Information request we submitted. One could say that submitting this request was meant to enact precisely the motto the university prides itself on: we embarked on a journey pursuing the unknown, hoping to expand our knowledge and deepen our understanding; yet the response we received left us groping in the dark.

Surprisingly, the university’s primary justification for refusing to disclose information about its ties with military bodies and companies in the military industry was not “security considerations” (these were added later in the letter, just in case) but rather “unreasonable resource allocation”:

In response to your request under the Freedom of Information Law for information regarding Tel Aviv University’s engagements with the Ministry of Defense, the defense industry, the Mossad, the Shabak [ISA], and the IDF, I hereby reply as follows:

¹⁵³ G. Zohar, [“Lifting the Veil of Secrecy”](#), *TAU: Tel Aviv University Review*, Winter 2008/09, 2–12 (in English).

The scope of the agreements that Tel Aviv University maintains with the bodies listed above is extensive, and locating all the agreements would require a great deal of work time and manpower, since there is no computerized system that tracks all the different agreements across the university. Even if it were possible to locate and collect all the agreements, an approach to each of the parties with whom the university has an agreement, as a third party, to request permission to disclose the information, would also require an unreasonable amount of work time. Therefore, in accordance with Section 8(1) of the Freedom of Information Law, concerning unreasonable allocation of resources, I reject your request for information.

Nevertheless, despite the university's refusal to provide us with specific information regarding its collaborations with military, intelligence, and military-industry bodies, it is worth dwelling on the third sentence of its response, which states that the scope of agreements between the university and the Ministry of Defense, the military industry, the Mossad, the ISA, and the IDF is so extensive that mapping them would require a great deal of work and manpower. In other words, the very justification the university provided for withholding the information testifies to the existence of a vast amount of information and an extensive scope of cooperation.

Later in the letter, the university wrote that all agreements it signed with state security bodies are subject to Appendix 93 of the Ministry of Defense:

Section 4a of the appendix stipulates: Any knowledge that the Ministry has provided to the supplier or has borne the costs of its acquisition or attainment, and any knowledge that has been obtained as a result of development or research for which the Ministry pays or bears the costs, or that has been obtained as a result of the execution of this order or through funds paid by the Ministry as part of this order, shall be the exclusive property of the Ministry, and the supplier is forbidden from using it except for the purpose of executing this order. The knowledge shall be kept by the supplier in a manner that will prevent its transfer to any other person and will also prevent its use by other people.

Section 6b of the appendix stipulates:

The supplier undertakes to keep the Ministry's knowledge confidential... as well as information and documents related to the execution of this order that come into its possession during or as a result of its execution. The supplier undertakes not to use the knowledge or the information or documents as aforesaid or any part thereof for purposes other than this order.

These two sections of Appendix 93 of the Ministry of Defense reveal several additional aspects regarding the collaborations between the military and academia. The first concerns why there is almost no academic research on militarism, weapons, and other topics related to the military in particular and security bodies in Israel in general: the confidentiality conditions that the Ministry of Defense imposes on academia (and like also by other military bodies and military-industrial companies) as a prerequisite for cooperation and raw data (data that is vital for conducting research), rule out in advance any possibility of sharing this knowledge with the public; thereby neutralizing the motivation of academic researchers to study these topics, knowing that they will be unable to share their findings with the public, or even with their academic colleagues. In this context, there is also the phenomenon of research or papers that were nevertheless written about state security bodies, including doctoral dissertations, whose findings are only exposed to the Ministry of Defense or other security bodies, as part of their agreement to cooperate and provide confidential data. This clearly contradicts the claims of academia as a free institution that promotes human knowledge and shares it with the public. The second aspect that these sections reveal is why Tel Aviv University and other academic institutions are so willing to cooperate with the security establishment and the military industry: they know from the outset that the information about such collaborations will remain confidential indefinitely, that public or internal institutional scrutiny will not be possible, and that the academic institution's name will not be tarnished.

The third reason cited by Tel Aviv University in its response – that contacting the various parties with whom the university maintains contractual relationships with would itself require substantial labor – is questionable, and the response of the Hebrew University, which did provide partial information about its collaborations with the ISA and with a number of private and governmental companies in the military industry – Rafael, Elbit, and IAI – will testify to this.

The Hebrew University's response to our Freedom of Information request opened with the following paragraph:

The university has ties with the **Ministry of Defense** [emphasis in original].

As of the date of this response, the data are still under review by the Ministry of Defense, and until approval is received, the information remains confidential according to the provisions of Sections 9(a)(1) and 9(b)(7) of the Freedom of Information Law.

Later in its response, the university provided us with some raw data regarding the institution's collaborations with parties in Israel's military industry, while noting that this was partial information, or, in the wording of the official responsible for implementing

the Freedom of Information Law at the institution: “The university has engagements with parties in Israel’s defense industry. The university was authorized by these parties to disclose the following information.” In other words, it can be assumed that the scope of cooperation between the Hebrew University and military bodies, intelligence agencies, and military-industry companies is broader than the information that was disclosed. Hence, the information provided presents only a partial picture, and is certainly the less “problematic” information in the eyes of the military establishment. This wording was repeated throughout the university’s response. Nevertheless, it is worth dwelling on the information the university did provide.

As part of its response, the university attached a table containing many financial engagements related to scientific research with Rafael between the years 2019–2022:

23/11/2022	360,000.00	מחקר לפיתוח ציפורי
06/04/2022	300,000.00	מחקר בנושא ננו חלקיקים
02/02/2022	28,440.00	הדפסת רשת
24/11/2021	260,000.00	מחקר כליאה מנגטית
14/06/2021	1,500.00	בדיקות קריסטלוגרפיות
03/06/2021	100,000.00	מחקר בראייה ממוחשבת
10/02/2021	440,000.00	מחקר בנושא יצירת מבנים פרווידניים מורכבים בהדפסת תלת מימד
16/08/2020	80,000.00	מחקרי קוונטים
02/06/2020	30,000.00	מחקר בנושא מצעי קרמיקה לפיוור חום מרכיבי הספק
13/05/2020	30,000.00	מלגות לסטודנטיות
11/05/2020	260,000.00	מחקר בנושא ייצוב פלסמה על ידי שדות מנגטיים
12/03/2020	17,450.00	חברות במועדון קשרי תעשייה ואקדמיה במדעי המחשב
01/03/2020	200,000.00	מחקר בנושא עוקב תלת מימד וול ליישומים פיסיקליים
09/02/2020	680,000.00	Invariance and structure discovery in dynamical control system based on information theoretic constrains
16/04/2019	0	תהליך איכול תשתית
17/04/2019	80,000.00	מחקרי קוונטים
26/02/2019	155,000.00	Superior heat dissipation transparent ceramics for solid state laser

Table showing research collaborations between Rafael – Advanced Defense Systems and the Hebrew University between 2019–2022, from the university’s response to our Freedom of Information request. The table includes various research topics, such as “Research on Nanoparticles,” “research on Magnetic Confinement,” “Research on Plasma Stabilization using Magnetic Fields”, as well as the amount in Israeli Shekels that Rafael paid the university for each project.

The scope of cooperation between Rafael and the Hebrew University between the years 2019–2022 as reflected in the table above (which is very partial and contains only information that Rafael approved for the university to disclose to us) amounts to a total of ILS 3,022,390. Most of the cooperation reflected in the partial table consists of research collaborations, but it also includes items indicating the company’s cooperation with academia in “recruiting” students to work at Rafael. For example, the company funds “scholarships for women students” in the amount of ILS 30,000 and also pays for “membership in the Computer Science Industry and Academia Relations Club” at a

cost of ILS 17,450. Since the Hebrew University provided the table without any context or explanation regarding the objectives of the research, it is difficult to determine what is meant by “quantum research,” “magnetic confinement research,” or “research on the creation of complex porous structures in 3D printing,” but it can be assumed that these are studies that serve Rafael in the development of arms and military technology.

Rafael is a government owned company engaged in the development and production of “advanced weapons systems” (as its Hebrew name indicates), including missiles and active defense systems, which it sells on both the Israeli and international markets. It is also among the companies that regularly cooperate with a variety of academic institutions in Israel. In 2019, it was reported that half of the company's sales were to the Israeli Ministry of Defense.¹⁵⁴ In 2022, the company recorded revenues of ILS 11.6 billion from sales and reported orders totaling ILS 16.1 billion. According to the DIMSE database (which has been a part of New Profile since October 2022), Rafael exports its products to at least 48 different countries, including countries known for human rights violations: Brazil, China, Colombia, the United Arab Emirates, and many others.¹⁵⁵

The company's chair is former Israeli minister Yuval Steinitz, who holds a PhD in philosophy and is an academic himself, who was previously employed as a senior lecturer in philosophy at the University of Haifa and currently teaches at Reichman University. In recent years, Dr. Steinitz has published several articles in the military's journal *Ma'arachot*, including the article “Missiles, Gentlemen, Missiles!”, in which he argues that the military convention according to which the Air Force has an advantage as the “sole fire-carrier deep into the front and the enemy's rear” should be re-evaluated, and in the end concludes that “instead of turning planes into air-launched missile launchers – launchers that are extraordinarily expensive – it is better to add cheap boosters to missiles and launch them from simple trucks that will move around the country or from cheap ships that will sail in the seas.”¹⁵⁶

In 2019, Ben-Gurion University proudly announced the signing of a “strategic research cooperation agreement in the field of cyber threats” with Rafael.¹⁵⁷ Neta Cohen, at the time the CEO of BGN Technologies (Ben-Gurion University's technology commercialization company), stated following the signing of the agreement that “we look forward to close cooperation with Rafael, a global leader in advanced combat systems, in working on a range of groundbreaking projects in various fields.” Also according to the university's

¹⁵⁴ Ami Rojkes Dombé, “Rafael 2019: Half of Sales to the Ministry of Defense”, *IsraelDefense*, July 14, 2020 (in Hebrew).

¹⁵⁵ See [DIMSE's page on Rafael Advanced Defense Systems](#).

¹⁵⁶ Y. Steinitz, “Missiles, Gentlemen, Missiles!”, *Ma'arachot* 403–404 (2016): 70–74 (in Hebrew).

¹⁵⁷ [“Rafael and Ben-Gurion University Announce Strategic Research Cooperation Agreement in the Field of Cyber Threats”](#), Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, January 29, 2019.

announcement, “this agreement follows Rafael's decision to establish a research and development branch in the high-tech park in Beer Sheva, which will be launched later this year. The new center will focus on various aspects of advanced autonomous systems. The branch is located adjacent to Ben-Gurion University, in order to benefit from the university’s talents and expertise in these fields.”

This was not the first time that Rafael established a research and development center near academic institutions in order to enlist academia for its work. In 2017, the company began establishing a similar center in the Har Hotzvim industrial park in Jerusalem, with the aim of expanding its cooperation with researchers from the Hebrew University. According to an article published in *Calcalist*, “Rafael's choice of Har Hotzvim was made [...] with the aim of expanding human capital and collaborations with academic institutions. At Rafael, they explain that the main reason for this choice is the proximity to the Hebrew University and its pool of experts in the field of computer vision.”¹⁵⁸ Dr. Ran Gozali, then Senior Vice President and Head of the Research, Development and Engineering Division at Rafael, told *Calcalist* that “the center will focus on computer vision and image processing. We have been developing the field for years with the Hebrew University [...] The goal is to recruit excellent people in diverse professions.”

The Hebrew University also disclosed some information about its cooperation with Elbit and IAI. As to its ties with IAI, the university provided little information, claiming that “additional information and the agreements are confidential pursuant to sections 9(a)(1), 9(b)(6), and 9(b)(7) of the Freedom of Information Law.” However, even the reference to these specific sections of the Freedom of Information Law under which the university refused to disclose the collaborations offers a small glimpse into the nature of the information it is withholding. For example, Section 9(a)(1), cited by the university, stipulates that a public authority shall not disclose “information whose disclosure may pose a risk to state security, its foreign relations, public security, or the security or well-being of an individual”. The refusal to provide information on grounds that appear to relate to state security raises the suspicion that the information in question involves the development of weapons.

The information that the university was nevertheless authorized to disclose regarding IAI indicates collaboration at the university's career fair, as well as a few obscure items, such as “atmospheric model consulting services”:

¹⁵⁸ Amitai Gazit, [“Rafael Establishes New Development Center in Jerusalem”](#), *Calcalist*, October 25, 2017 (in Hebrew).

שירותי מעבדה, בדיקות, תוכנית קשרי תעשייה, שירותי יעוץ, יריד קריירה:

תאריך רישום	סכום במטבע מקומי	מטבע מקו	טקסט	יחידה
23/02/2020	11,422.46	ILS		הפק' למתמטיקה ולמדעי המחשב
29/06/2020	2,250.00	ILS		הפק' לחקלאות
25/02/2021	3,450.00	ILS	עבודות מרכז ננו ינואר 21	
06/06/2021	32,570.00	ILS	תוכנית קשרי תעשייה 20-21	
08/11/2021	24,300.00	ILS	שירותי יעוץ מודל אטמוספרי	
06/06/2022	1,400.00	ILS	עבור יריד הקריירה 2022	ביה"ס להנדסה ולמדעי המחשב

Table showing research collaborations between IAI and the Hebrew University between 2019-2022, from the university's response to our Freedom of Information request.

The Hebrew University even published an announcement on the website of its School of Engineering and Computer Science to mark the signing of the collaboration with IAI, stating: “We congratulate Israel Aerospace Industries [IAI] on joining the school's industry relations program.”¹⁵⁹ The announcement then turned into a recruitment advertisement for the company: “Israel Aerospace Industries is the largest and leading defense-technology company in Israel. The company and the technologies it has developed are considered global leaders in many fields such as UAVs, space and satellites [...] radar and intelligence systems, cyber warfare [...] Aerospace Industries is a profitable and growing company, whose core activity is the export of technologies and systems to various countries around the world. Israel Aerospace Industries employs outstanding engineering students, and offers a challenging work environment at the technological forefront and excellent [employment] conditions [...] We are looking for people for whom professionalism and innovation are leading values. If the sky is the limit for you, join us for a variety of fascinating positions.” The end of the announcement-recruitment ad includes a link to job openings at the company. A recruitment event for IAI was also published on Tel Aviv University's website.¹⁶⁰

According to an article published in the military magazine *New-Tech*, in July 2022 a new master's degree program in systems engineering was launched at the Technion in collaboration with IAI.¹⁶¹ The same article included an interview with Brigadier General (Res.) Eitan Eshel, IAI's Vice President of Technologies, Innovation, and R&D, who previously served as Head of the Research and Development Department Division at the DDR&D, and had also worked at Elbit. In the interview, Eshel stated that “among the things I can discuss without information security restrictions, I would first and foremost point to quantum. The development of quantum computing will put us in a different place in everything related to the performance of systems. In this regard, we are in close contact with several leading parties: the Hebrew University, Bar-Ilan University...”

¹⁵⁹ “We Welcome Israel Aerospace Industries to the School's Industry Relations Program”, Rachel & Selim Benin School of Engineering and Computer Science, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, December 31, 2018 (in Hebrew).

¹⁶⁰ “The Technological Challenge of Israel Aerospace Industries”, Iby and Alder Fleischman Faculty of Engineering, Tel Aviv University, December 12, 2022 (in Hebrew).

¹⁶¹ Amir Bar-Shalom, “Innovation in the Air – The Innovation Center of Israel Aerospace Industries”, *New-Tech Military Magazine*, July 5, 2022 (in Hebrew).

However, the Hebrew University and Bar-Ilan University are not the only academic institutions collaborating in the development of quantum technologies together with the military industry. According to an article published by *HaYad'an* in September 2019, "Israel Aerospace Industries, Rafael, Accubeat, Ben-Gurion University, the Technion, the Weizmann Institute, the Hebrew University, Bar-Ilan University, and Ariel University launched the 'Quantum Technologies Development Consortium' at a ceremony held at Israel Aerospace Industries, as part of a program of the Innovation Authority in the Ministry of Economy and the Directorate of Defense Research and Development in the Ministry of Defense (DDR&D)."¹⁶²

Regarding the Hebrew University's cooperation with Elbit, the university was permitted to disclose only that Elbit pays for a "subscription to the industry relations program with the School of Engineering and Computer Science (in the years: 2020, 2021, and 2022) at an annual rate of \$5000." The reference to a "subscription to the industry relations program" likely denotes the possibility of collaboration between Elbit and the Hebrew University in relation to recruiting students to the company.

Another interesting finding revealed in the last section of the Hebrew University's response to our request for information concerns its collaboration with the ISA. Until now, it was known that ISA recruitment booths appear at career fairs at various academic institutions across the country, but according to the university's admission, the collaboration is apparently far broader and also includes joint research. As stated in the response:

The university was permitted to disclose that engagements exist between the university and the **Israel Security Agency** [emphasis in original] for research in a total amount of 607,200 ILS in the years 2019-2022.

Another institution that collaborates with IAI is the Technion. In the limited response provided by the Technion to our Freedom of Information request, the university included a contract signed between the institution and IAI in 2015. According to the contract, the company would place two antennas for receiving unprocessed satellite signals for positioning purposes – one on the roof of the southern staircase and another on the roof of the elevator shaft of the Rabin building (which houses the Faculty of Civil Engineering) on campus. IAI would also install a cabinet and infrastructure in the communication room located on the 6th floor of the same building. The permit was given to the company in exchange for licensing fees, the amount of which was redacted in the contract.

¹⁶² Israel Aerospace Industries, "[The Quantum Technologies Development Consortium Established](#)", *HaYadan*, September 11, 2019 (In Hebrew).

According to Section 5.11 of the contract in question, the Technion declares that: “Security arrangements are maintained in the Technion campus in accordance with the standards set by the competent authorities and by the official responsible for campus security. The Technion undertakes that should there be a material change in these security arrangements, it will bring them to the company’s attention.” This constitutes evidence of cooperation between a civilian academic institution and a state-owned company that is military in nature, on matters of security. Subordinating the principles of managing the academic space to parties with military principles could not only infringe on the privacy of students and faculty members, but may also create a discriminatory oversight mechanism, capable of restricting civilians’ freedom of movement based on “security considerations,” foremost among them national identity and ethnic origin.

Additional significant information was redacted from the contract: Section 5.2 states that “the Technion declares that it is aware that the company intends to sign an agreement with [redacted] which will remotely operate the station and assume ownership of the station and all its equipment, without thereby detracting from the commitment of IAI towards the Technion under this contract.” In other words, there is a third company with which IAI collaborates, but whose identity was barred from disclosure. The agreement was signed by two representatives from the Technion – Matanyahu Englman, who at the time of signing served as CEO and Vice President of the Technion and currently serves as Israel’s State Comptroller, and another representative who at the time served as Vice President for Research. On behalf of IAI, the agreement was signed by the manager of the MLM. [an Hebrew abbreviation for ‘Integrated Combat Systems’] plant and the plant’s accountant. According to IAI’s website, the plant specializes in the production of “air and missile defense systems, launch and space technologies, command and control systems, precision strike systems, and advanced simulation and training systems.”¹⁶³ In March 2023, IAI signed an extension of the contract with the Technion.

Each year, the Technion hosts the “Aeronautical Sciences” conference under the auspices of the Faculty of Aerospace Engineering. On the conference webpage, the Technion boasts that the conference is the result of a collaboration between the institution and the following bodies: the Israeli Air Force, Rafael, and IAI.¹⁶⁴

In 2023, the chair of the conference’s organizing committee was Brigadier General Shlomi Konforti, head of the Equipment Division at the Israeli Air Force Headquarters. The chair of the program committee was Prof. Beni Cukurel, an associate professor in the Faculty of Aerospace Engineering at the Technion.

¹⁶³ “Systems Missiles & Space (SMS) Group”, Israel Aerospace Industries (in English).

¹⁶⁴ [“The 62nd Israel Annual Conference on Aerospace Sciences”](#), Technion – Israel Institute of Technology (in English).

According to Ayelet, a Jewish-Israeli former student at the Technion:

To the best of my understanding, at the Technion there is a research group, a lab, in the field of robotics, that deals with drones. At some point, one of the development bodies, maybe MAFAT [DDR&D], published a tender for the development of future weapons, innovation in the field of weapons, so the lab at the Technion proposed the concept of “suicide drones”, drones that arrive somewhere and explode. This was a concept to submit to some security body. It was only a project in which a very basic prototype was presented so that they could secure funding. It was a relatively preliminary stage. I don't know what happened with it since then.

According to Eyal, a Jewish-Israeli law student at Bar-Ilan University, there is another dimension of militaristic indoctrination at his university's faculty of law:

In the Faculty of Law there are law clubs. Someone from the faculty or a group of students run open events on academic topics. You get research materials and court rulings to read and understand, and then you come and discuss them. There are many clubs, and one of the biggest is the Law and Military Club. And figures who previously held positions in the security establishment also come there, mainly as a kind of encouragement for academic reservists. And it's a place for indoctrination. It's not an academic space, it's a completely political space, transparent politics. Supposedly it's not ideological, but it's completely militaristic, one-way, there's no place for dialogue or anything like that; for them, it's a place to indoctrinate and explain why Israel is okay and why targeted killings are legitimate. It's open to all students. And also more specific things, it's not uncommon for lecturers to bring guest lecturers; in law it happens a little more than in other places, there's a guest lecturer in almost every course. And there were guest lecturers who were police officers or soldiers in the past. Even if it's in the past, the militaristic discourse is very present in the space. You can't ignore it.

Doron, a Jewish-Israeli graduate student at the University of Haifa, describes a research collaboration:

At our research institute, there's now some joint project with Rafael. The institute is the IIPDM, an institute for cognitive psychology research that is part of the University of Haifa [IIPDM – The Institute of Information Processing and Decision Making].

Doron's remarks naturally raise the question: why would Rafael want to conduct research in cognitive psychology?

Although Tel Aviv University refused to provide a substantive response to our Freedom of Information request, an article published on nrg in 2017 nevertheless provides a glimpse into its research collaborations with the military industry. The article stated that the DDR&D Head Prize was awarded that year to two teams: Unit 8200 in the military's Intelligence Division; and to a team composed of researchers from Tel Aviv University, Rafael, the Ground Technology Division (a military body that deals with the development of weapons used by the army's ground forces), the KMG, and DDR&D, for “the implementation of a multi-disciplinary R&D program.”¹⁶⁵ The head of the DDR&D, who awarded the prize together with the then head of R&D at DDR&D, said at the ceremony that “each of the winners arrived, through groundbreaking thinking, at the development of an exceptional weapon that is unparalleled and stands at the forefront of global knowledge.” The article further notes that “the award for outstanding researcher was given to Prof. Emanuel Peled of Tel Aviv University, who over many years made a significant contribution to security, science and industry in Israel.”

Further evidence of collaboration between Tel Aviv University, the Ministry of Defense, and the military is found on the Israeli Air Force website, which in 2017 published an item stating that “in a rare meeting between representatives of the technical array, the Ministry of Defense, and the academia, headed by the Chief of the Equipment Directorate and the President of Tel Aviv University, a launch event was held for the joint procurement of a metal 3D printer that will introduce the technical corps to new technological realms.” The project, dubbed “Marvad,” was carried out in cooperation between the Air Force, the DDR&D, and Tel Aviv University. The item adds that “the project reflects the shared goals of all the parties involved, including the development of dedicated technology for military needs as well as for academic scientific research.” Prof. Yosef Klafter, then-president of Tel Aviv University, was quoted as saying that “academia has a reputation for being an ivory tower – but we do not live in a bubble at all. Rather, we maintain cooperation with the defense establishment, with industry, and with other bodies. Both sides benefit from finding the golden path, and we are committed to moving in this direction.”¹⁶⁶

In the 2008-9 issue of *TAU Review* [Tel Aviv University Review], the university boasted that at that time the DDR&D funded 55 research projects at the university, and 9 more were funded by the U.S. Department of Defense.¹⁶⁷ Since that publication, the

¹⁶⁵ Yochai Ofer, “[Unit 8200 Wins Prestigious Award for Developing Complex Technology](#)”, *NRG*, September 7, 2017 (in Hebrew).

¹⁶⁶ Ilan Tohar, “[Joint Procurement for a Metal 3D Printer](#)”, Israeli Air Force, May 10, 2017 (in Hebrew).

¹⁶⁷ See note 153 above.

university has refrained from publicly releasing information related to its military research collaborations.

Tel Aviv University also cooperates in research with the ISA, with which it partnered in 2018 to establish the The Xcelerator program, a “startup accelerator” in which experts from the ISA work together with entrepreneurs to develop various technologies, especially those in the field of cyber.¹⁶⁸ In a 2020 article published in *Forbes Israel*, Nimrod Cohen, then managing partner at Tel Aviv University’s fund, explained the advantages of collaboration with academia, including the recruitment of students and the use of knowledge accumulated at the academic institution: “Since we have a university behind us, we can offer all the resources it has: from students doing internships at the startups, through knowledge that exists at the university, to office space.”¹⁶⁹ Among the products of this collaboration is the startup Xtend, which develops drone systems together with the DDR&D and the US Department of Defense.¹⁷⁰

Ben-Gurion University chose to not provide us with any information. In its response, the university wrote that “pursuant to Section 8(3) of the Freedom of Information Law, the information requested in your application cannot be located,” since the university does not maintain “a database of agreements from which agreements can be retrieved according to the requested criteria,” and that “the university has a long list of authorized signatories, so that agreements that are signed are not held by a single body.” These explanations are puzzling, and it would be surprising if it were indeed the case that at one of the largest academic institutions in Israel it is impossible to locate a list of agreements by contracting entity, or at least to locate partial information as was done by other institutions we approached.

At the end of its letter, the university added that “we can re-examine your request if you direct us to specific agreements you wish to receive and we will try to locate them, bearing in mind that if a decision is made to disclose the information, such disclosure would require – among other things – consideration of the exception relating to state and public security, and the consent of third parties.” This wording contains two inherent obstacles: the first is the university's demand that we direct it to specific agreements we wish to receive, when we have no way of requesting specific agreements whose existence is unknown to us, which is precisely the reason for the request in the first place; The second obstacle is the declaration that even if we do direct the university to specific agreements,

¹⁶⁸ [“TAU Ventures Innovation Programs”](#), Tel Aviv University (in English).

¹⁶⁹ [“The Secret Program: How the Unique Shin Bet Accelerator Operates”](#), *Forbes Israel*, March 10, 2020 (in Hebrew).

¹⁷⁰ Seth J. Frantzman, [“Israeli Startup’s Counter-Drone Augmented Reality System to Deploy with US Forces”](#), *Defense News*, September 8, 2020 (in English).

disclosure of the information would nevertheless be conditioned on an assessment of the risk that publication might pose to state and public security. When we nevertheless insisted and requested from the university a general list of its engagements, so that the response would not need to be segmented by certain criteria, the university replied that “the inability to locate the information remains.”

Despite Ben-Gurion University's refusal to respond substantively to our Freedom of Information request, we found several examples of cooperation between the university, the Ministry of Defense, and the military industry. In 2014, for example, a news item on nrg described how students from the Faculty of Engineering Sciences at the university developed “a prototype of a small intelligent robot designed to collect information inside urban environments during military operations along with a suitable control unit,” in cooperation with the DDR&D.¹⁷¹ In 2021, the university published a call for proposals for joint research with the DDR&D.¹⁷² The call detailed that “the research must include researchers from BGU [Ben-Gurion University]. Researchers from other universities may be part of the research team, provided that the research is carried out as stated in the location section above. The inclusion of personnel from technological units of the Military Intelligence and the C4I Division in the IDF in the research will constitute a significant advantage.”

Universities in Israel do not confine themselves to cooperation with the Israeli military industry, and at times also sign agreements with foreign arms companies. This is the case, for example, with the agreement signed between Ramot, Tel Aviv University's commercialization company, and the international military-industry giant Leonardo in February of this year. In an article published about the agreement on *ice*, Ramot's CEO, Keren Primor, was quoted as saying: “I am happy to promote a strategic partnership that combines Leonardo's many capabilities with the advanced research and development capabilities of Tel Aviv University researchers, who are among the best in the world. We see it as a great privilege to be the first Israeli academic institution to join forces with the giant Leonardo, which is signed on groundbreaking successes in the field of the defense industry, and we see this step as an expression of confidence that will allow us to leverage innovative technologies and promote business activity and opportunities for growth.” Ongoing collaborations also exist between Leonardo and local military industry companies, including Rafael, IAI, Elbit, as well as the Ministry of Defense and the Israeli Air Force.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Assaf Golan, “Sophisticated Robots to Be Presented at Ben-Gurion University Innovation Conference”, *NRG*, June 12, 2014 (in Hebrew).

¹⁷² “Call for Joint Research Projects between Ben-Gurion University, DDR&D/Israeli Ministry of Defense 2021–2022”, Tel Aviv University Research Authority, December 26, 2021 (in Hebrew).

¹⁷³ “Tel Aviv University in an Unprecedented Move: The First of Its Kind Collaboration Revealed”, *ice*, February 5, 2023 (in Hebrew). Tel Aviv University (and Israeli academia more broadly) is, of course, not unique in its cooperation with the military industry. A 2022 [news item](#) on Leonardo's website illustrates

CONCLUSION

This chapter reviewed research collaborations between academic institutions in Israel and the military, state security and intelligence bodies, and military industry. As can be seen from the partial response provided by the Hebrew University to our Freedom of Information request, from the even more limited response provided by the Technion to a similar request, and from the outright refusal of other academic institutions to share any information, the scope of cooperation in this field is very broad. Throughout the chapter, we established that research collaborations are manifested in various forms, including direct cooperation in research funded by military bodies and often conducted on their behalf; the joint management of military-academic programs, as in the case of the ISA and Tel Aviv University's "startup accelerator", and Ben-Gurion University's collaboration with the DDR&D in the research and development of weapons; the placement of military or semi-military facilities on academic campuses [see also in this report: ["Entry Forbidden by Order": Military Compounds](#)]; the establishment of research and development centers for weapons by military companies near academic campuses in order to facilitate military-academic collaborations, as in the case of Rafael, which established such centers near the Hebrew University and Ben-Gurion University; and additional forms of recruiting students into the military industry, as reflected in the Hebrew University's response to our Freedom of Information request.

In our review of military-academic research collaborations, we showed how these constitute a significant aspect of the militarization of academia, as the latter takes an active and sometimes even central role in the development of weapons for private companies and the defense establishment. These various collaborations expose academic institutions as central and essential actors for the military industry and the Israeli security establishment, and as such, as bearing direct responsibility for the destructive consequences of these developments.

For the responses of the academic institutions and the Council for Higher Education to the claims in the report, see the [appendix of responses](#).

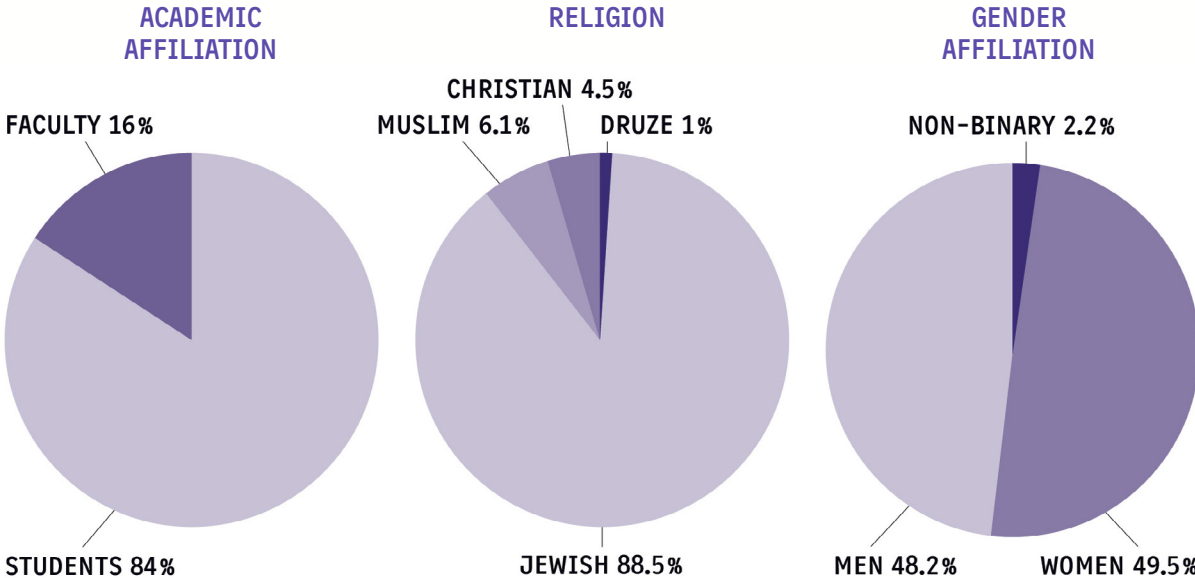
CHAPTER V

PERCEPTIONS OF COLLABORATION

This chapter examines how students and academics in academic institutions in Israel perceive militarism and militarization, and in particular their view of the collaborations between the military, defense establishment, military industry, and academia. The first part of the chapter includes an analysis of the responses collected through questionnaires we distributed to students and academics. The second part presents additional testimonies from students and their perspectives on these collaborations.

QUESTIONNAIRES AND ADDITIONAL TESTIMONIES

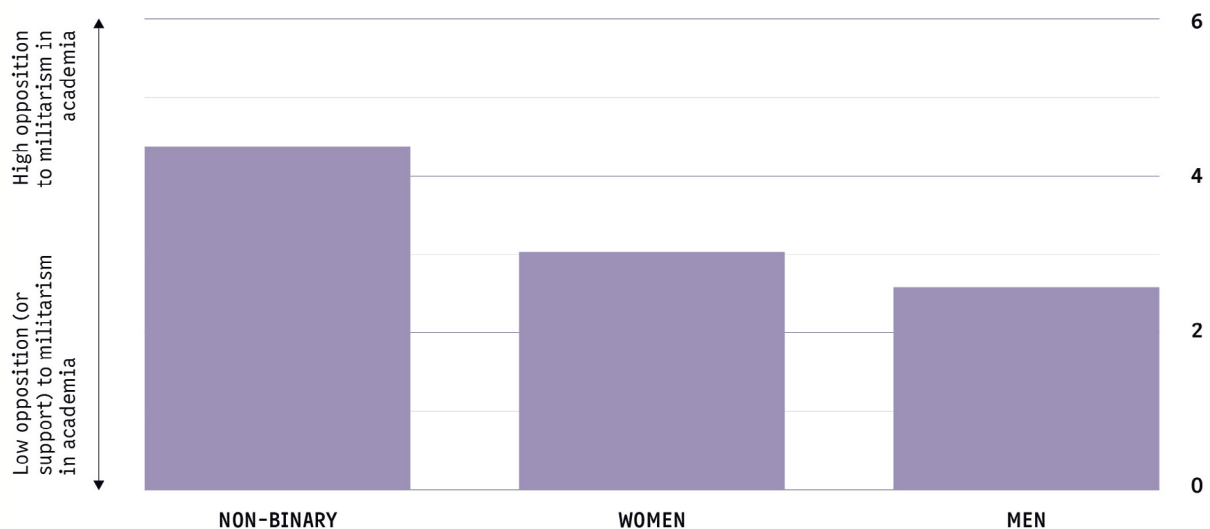
As part of the research, and as detailed in the [methodology chapter](#), we distributed questionnaires to students and academics to assess the extent of support for – or opposition to – various militaristic aspects in Israeli academia, based on respondents’ ratings of their level of support or comfort with these characteristics. The sample was not intended to provide an accurate statistical picture, but rather a qualitative analysis of attitudes among students and academics. As part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate their religion and gender identity. As can be seen from the three charts below, there is an underrepresentation of two main groups – academic staff and individuals who identified as non-Jewish. Although we anticipated a certain bias in the findings from the questionnaires distributed to academics, since most respondents were affiliated with Academia for Equality, which is identified as a left-wing organization, we found that the results of the students’ questionnaires and those of the academics were almost identical. We therefore decided to combine them in the charts.



In the following figures, we decided to weigh several different variables, the average of which we defined as indicating either “high opposition to militarism in academia” or “low opposition (or support) to militarism in academia.” These two categories were calculated on the basis of the following variables: comfort/discomfort with the presence of weapons in the classroom; comfort/discomfort with the presence of uniformed soldiers on campus; comfort/discomfort with the presence of armed soldiers on campus; comfort/discomfort with the presence of armed civilians on campus; comfort/discomfort with

expressing opinions in class in the presence of soldiers; agreement/disagreement with research collaborations between academia and the defense establishment; agreement/disagreement with collaborations between the military industry and academia; agreement/disagreement with collaborations between academia and the military, other state security bodies, and the military industry in “recruiting” students through career fairs, workshops, and other campus events.

SUPPORT/OPPOSITION TO MILITARISM IN ACADEMIA BY GENDER IDENTITY (STUDENTS + FACULTY)



As can be seen in this figure, among the respondents to the questionnaires, manifestations of militarism in academia were more bothersome to those who did not identify as men, though not to a significant degree, except for respondents who identified as non-binary. On the one hand, these findings align with the patriarchal nature of militaristic societies, which tend to favor men and disadvantage women and other genders, among other things because most of those who carry weapons in both civilian and military spaces are men. On the other hand, it appears that on average, among the survey respondents, students and faculty of all genders are relatively indifferent to the phenomena of militarism in academia. This widespread indifference can be explained by the long-standing and ongoing internalization and normalization of militaristic values in Israeli civil society, which make the phenomena of militarism transparent and self-evident. The significant opposition to militaristic phenomena among those who identified as non-binary can be attributed to the fact that non-binary gender identity, which often rejects the accepted dichotomous perceptions that are at the core of conservative gender division, is by definition a political and radical identity category. It can be assumed that the same radical and non-conformist ways of thinking that challenge gender-related social conventions are also those that allow for critical perspective on other institutional phenomena that are in social consensus.

SUPPORT/OPPOSITION TO MILITARISM IN ACADEMIA BY RELIGIOUS IDENTITY (STUDENTS + STAFF)

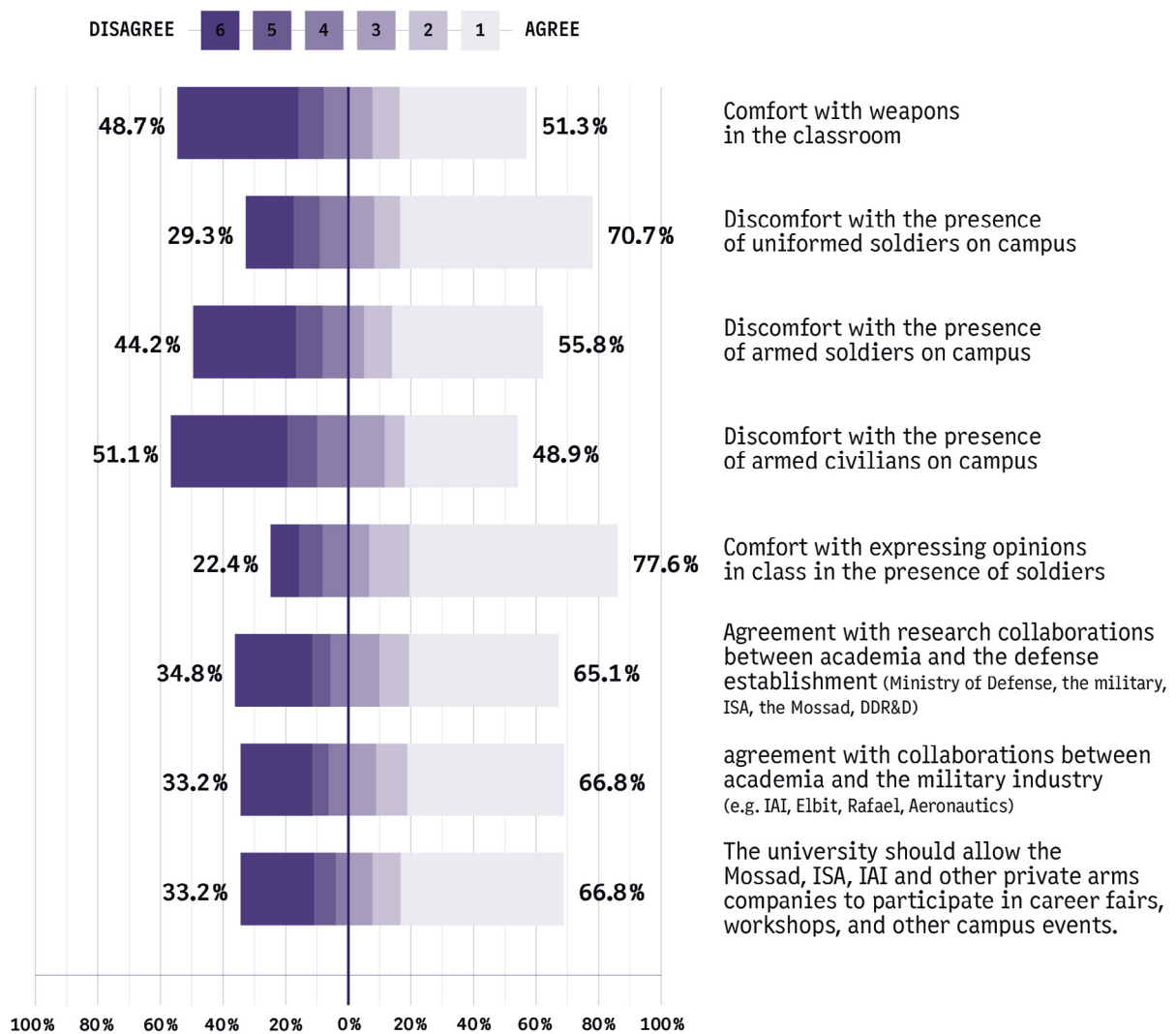


This figure shows that among respondents to the questionnaires, the highest rate of opposition to militarism came from those who identified as Christians and Muslims. This finding can be explained by the nationalistic nature of the militaristic system (both generally and particularly in Israel) and the fact that it prioritizes and privileges the hegemonic group in society, which in Israel is the Jewish population. Additionally, members of these religious groups are the primary victims of military violence in Israel. An exception is the relatively high support of militarism among Druze respondents. This can be explained by the unique context and relations of Druze in Israel, in which a large portion serve in compulsory military service, and their representation as officers is higher than their proportion in the general population.^{174 175}

¹⁷⁴ Allison Kaplan Sommer, [“The Druze Community in Israel, Explained”](#), *Haaretz*, June 11, 2023 (in English).

¹⁷⁵ Zeidan Atashi, [“Druze in Israel and the Question of Compulsory Military Service”](#), *Jewish Virtual Library* (in English).

GENERAL SUPPORT/OPPOSITION TO MILITARISM IN ACADEMIA



This figure represents the perceptions of all students and academics who responded to the questionnaires regarding militarism in Israeli academia, broken down into the different variables defined in the questionnaires. A score of 1 indicates support or comfort with the phenomenon presented in the question, while a score of 6 indicates opposition or discomfort.

As apparent from this figure, more than half of respondents were disturbed by the presence of armed civilians on campus, and nearly half were not comfortable with the presence of armed soldiers on campus. Similarly, almost half of respondents were not comfortable with the presence of weapons in the classroom, whether carried by soldiers or civilians. About one-third opposed the presence of soldiers in uniform on campus and opposed recruitment and research collaborations with the defense establishment and the military industry. Slightly more than a one-fifth of respondents were uncomfortable

expressing opinions in a class where soldiers are present. These details suggest that the presence of weapons on campuses is far from consensual and is troubling for many in the academic community.

These findings indicate that, among survey respondents, there is both opposition to and support for cooperation between academia and the defense establishment. The significant support for such collaborations may reflect the internalization and normalization of militaristic values within Israeli civil society.

Noor, a Palestinian student at the Technion, describes her feelings about military-academic cooperation:

I think the campus should be a completely civilian space, first of all so that everyone feels comfortable there. I think one of the points that the Israeli mainstream tries to convey is that it's the people's army and therefore it's okay. But I don't think that Arab students should have to feel that, and neither should [other] students who don't serve, and international students. I think that academia should not be a tool in the hands of the military, and in many countries around the world, they [students] don't study in order to commit war crimes. On the other hand, there is an occupation, so there is a certain difficulty and society itself is also very militaristic, so it's not just academia itself, it's the whole society. For example, many Arab students don't attend Israeli universities but go study [at academic institutions] in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, or abroad, also because of these experiences, because academia is militarized like the rest of Israeli society, and also very Israeli which intimidates people.

Noor's words align with other testimonies collected for this report: cooperation of academic institutions with militaristic bodies, such as the Israeli military and military industry, and the implementation of militaristic norms (e.g. the presence of military uniforms and weapons on campuses) marginalizes individuals and groups who disagree with these collaborations and norms, effectively turning academia into an institution dominated by a single, hegemonic voice.

Noor also shares her thoughts and feelings regarding her own academic future:

At first, I thought I might even want to continue to a PhD in Israel, but I saw how continuing with my political activity, if I wanted to continue with activism while pursuing a master's and a PhD at the Technion or any other institution, would be really difficult for me. I would have to [choose], either I pursue an advanced degree here in Israel or I continue with [political] activism. They really set a limit for Arab-Palestinian academics in many ways, [so that they] cannot really

advance. I think they [Palestinians] reach a point where they cannot advance. And yes, I considered doing my further degrees elsewhere in the world. A few years ago there was a story about a PhD student who was active in the BDS in the US and she came to the Hebrew [University], and many [Israeli] right-wing activists protested that she doesn't deserve to come to Israel and she was arrested for a few days at Ben Gurion Airport because of her BDS activism.¹⁷⁶

Thus, Israeli academia not only initially excludes many students who could have contributed new perspectives and diverse voices in favor of military-academic collaborations and catering to Israeli militaristic sentiment, but it also drives away those who do choose to study within it, forcing them to leave early in their academic journey due to ideological conflicts and other challenges. For those who nevertheless remain, despite opposing academic militarism, it presents an unfair dilemma: political activism or an academic career.

According to Eyal, a Jewish-Israeli law student at Bar-Ilan University, military-academic collaborations lead to the exclusion of those oppose militarization and contribute to the normalization of institutional violence:

There is a feeling that this is not a political thing, it is not a present thing, but there is a statement in it that is exclusive. It certainly excludes Palestinians, it certainly normalizes violence and the use of violence, and academia has this desire to show some kind of love of wisdom or some intellectual thing like that, but it is clear that this is not the reality. People study in academia and academia is built so that we go to work and earn money. Academia has long since ceased to be some place just for research. But when it is rooted in militarism, there is something in it that is already a bit at the other extreme. We study law to represent the state and things like that, it's very, very complex. I have a hard time with the transparent ideology in it. There is no normative statement here of complete acceptance of reality as it is. And especially that there is no other side to it. It's not some liberal discourse that needs to present both sides, there just isn't a second side and this side is a completely normalized side and it creates a very distorted picture of reality.

¹⁷⁶ Noor is referring to the case of Lara Alqasem, who in 2018 was denied entry into Israel on the grounds that she was a boycott activist. The decision was later overturned by Israel's Supreme Court, following an appeal by Alqasem. For further reading, see *Al Jazeera's* report, [here](#) (in English).

Eyal goes on to describe a non-academic legal workshop he attended, which sharpened his understanding of the gap between what is permissible and what is forbidden in academic spaces and discourse:

For example, Michael Sfard [an Israeli lawyer specializing in international human rights law and the laws of war], recently gave a [lecture] at the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation on law and occupation. And what went on there and what goes on in the university, the gap is psychotic. The gap between what he talks about and what goes on in academia is just huge. Very, very dramatic. Not because the truth is different. Everyone talks about court rulings. It's just that as soon as militarism is a legitimate and integral part of the discourse, it cuts off everything that is to the [political] left of a little criticism. It's dramatic, it's very, very significant. It's very noticeable. Absolutely. And there are also lecturers who have a hard time with the discourse, who feel uncomfortable, and are very selective with their words about what has a place in the space and what doesn't. I am completely convinced, without a doubt, that there are [lecturers who have] left-wing and critical opinions and they are afraid to express them. Mainly [afraid] of students. There was a Palestinian lecturer [at Bar-Ilan University] who said some very mild left-wing things, nothing dramatic, and there was a backlash against her from the students and there was a petition against her that was sent to the dean and so on.

From Eyal's account, which joins other testimonies and findings presented throughout the report, it is clear that military-academic collaborations (which are expressed, among other things, in the presence of soldiers on campus and the militarized perceptions of students) nullify the possibility of open and critical discourse in this space. An academia which forbids criticising the state's most powerful institutions, which directly affect the lives of citizens and residents, is a silenced and mobilized academia.

According to Michal, a Jewish-Israeli undergraduate student at the University of Haifa:

I think academia should not be neutral, and a part of this is that it should oppose Israeli militarism, the Israeli military complex, and therefore I think it is right not to let all the bodies mentioned, from the industry, the ISA, the military, etc., into the university.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we examined how processes of militarization in academia in Israel affect students and academics. An analysis of the responses to the questionnaires we distributed indicates that these processes disturb many students, and significantly harm women and other gender identities, as well as Christian and Muslim students. From the testimonies of students presented in this chapter and throughout the research, it appears that processes of militarization in Israel often exclude groups that are not part of the Jewish hegemony from academic space and that they affect the curricula as well as the possibilities for expression and criticism in academic institutions.

For the responses of the academic institutions and the Council for Higher Education to the claims in the report, see the [appendix of responses](#).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

As we have shown throughout this report, there is extensive cooperation between Israeli academia and the military, security establishment, and the military industry, which turns academia into an active partner of the Israeli military, and of its control over people and resources – both over Palestinian citizens of Israel within the 1948 borders, Palestinians under occupation in the West Bank, Palestinians under siege and constant military threat in the Gaza Strip, and over huge parts of Israel's territory and its resources. This cooperation also shapes the academic and civilian space and affects many students and faculty, as well as the boundaries of thought and research in Israeli academia.

In Chapter I, we showed how militarization processes are expressed in military-academic study programs, and how these harm both other students and the soldier-students themselves. We highlighted the active role of academia in managing these programs, recruiting youth, and silencing criticism of these collaborations. We also demonstrated how academic institutions benefit from these collaborations, in part through substantial financial income.

In Chapter II, we showed how the militarization of academia in Israel is expressed in academic spaces. The chapter presented testimonies from students and academics regarding the presence of weapons and military uniforms in academic spaces, and how these exclude students and academics and undermine their sense of safety. A number of cases in which academic spaces were used for military purposes were also reviewed.

In Chapter III, which examined the recruitment of students on academic campuses and discrimination in admission to academic institutions and student housing, we showed how military bodies and military-industrial companies work to recruit students for their services, in full cooperation with academic institutions. We also showed how academic institutions themselves employ militaristic practices in admission processes and how they sometimes prioritize former soldiers and reservists in eligibility for student housing.

In Chapter IV, which focused on military-academic research collaborations, we showed how academic institutions cooperate in research with the Ministry of Defense, state security and intelligence bodies, and companies in the military industry, and how these constitute a significant aspect of the militarization processes in academia, as it takes an active, and sometimes even central, role in the development of weapons for private and governmental companies and state bodies.

In Chapter V, which examined the perceptions of academics and students regarding military-academic collaborations and the militarization processes they promote, we showed how these negatively affect many students and academics. An analysis of the responses to the questionnaires we distributed shows that these processes disturb many students, and significantly harm non-Jewish students, as well as women and other gender

identities. The student testimonies presented in this chapter and throughout the report show that militarization processes exclude from the academic space groups that are not part of the militaristic hegemony in Israel, and that they affect curricula and restrict freedom of discussion in academic institutions.

As noted in the introduction, this report complements earlier publications on the relationship between academia and militarism, and clearly demonstrates both the existence and extent of these collaborations. At the same time, this is a partial report, and much information, as well as many other forms of cooperation and their impact on the lives of people and groups, have not yet been sufficiently researched. We encourage researchers, activists, journalists, and civil society organizations to continue investigating, to press for access to information, and to expose the full picture and its complex implications.

It is important to remember that the phenomenon of militarism in academia, along with the civil-military collaborations highlighted in this report represent only one aspect of the broader militarism permeating Israeli civil society. To oppose its existence and the dominant role it holds in civilian life in Israel – where, in the name of “security,” it legitimizes violence both within and beyond the state – we must demand significant structural changes from the state and the de-militarization of civilian institutions. The power of words is limited, and we must move beyond writing and into reality, and take effective action to oppose the various forms of this cooperation.

As we have shown in this report, a mobilized academia is, by definition, an unfree academia, and its research and teaching (at least in part) are inevitably biased by virtue of their subordination to agreements with military bodies and cooperation with militaristic values and practices. A sound academia in a democratic state must operate with transparency and ensure freedom of expression, research, and study. We must work to create mechanisms for civilian oversight and limitation of collaborations with military institutions.

As an inherently civilian institution, Israeli academia must refuse to train youth, soldiers, officers, and senior military personnel in military-academic programs; refuse to operate military facilities and military bases within its boundaries; refuse to cooperate in the recruitment of students for service and work in the military, intelligence bodies, and the military industry; refuse to cooperate in the research and development of lethal weapons and surveillance technology; prohibit the entry of weapons into academic institutions, and establish fair and equal rules for all candidates for admission and for student housing under its responsibility.

We encourage students and academics who oppose militarism in academia to organize and formulate their demands from the academic institutions in which they study, teach,

or research. It is vital to demand information where it is concealed, refuse to cooperate where possible, and disseminate information, images, and testimonies about the harm done to students and faculty in the name of these collaborations. Raise a voice of protest in classrooms, in the media, and on social networks, express solidarity with those harmed by these collaborations, and join the activity of existing organizations, such as New Profile, Gun Free Kitchen Tables, Academia for Equality, and others, or establish new resistance groups.

APPENDIX OF RESPONSES

As of the publication of this report, none of the following provided comments: Ben-Gurion University, the University of Haifa, Reichman University, the Levinsky–Wingate Academic Center, DDR&D, Elbit Systems, Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, Future Scientists Center, Dr. Dan Shiftan, and Prof. Eviatar Matania.

The Council for Higher Education responded to the claims in the report:

“The matters stated in the report are not accurate, below is a factual reference to the claims raised in the report:

1. Already in the early 2000s, the Council for Higher Education (CHE) allowed academic institutions to grant exemptions from academic studies based on non-academic studies, and the decision was updated over the years.
2. The latest updates to the decision were adopted in 2019 and 2020 and were aligned with global trends and to the process of mapping national certificates that is currently taking place in Israel – NQF.
3. The decision (link [attached](#)) set a number of caveats such as:
 - The exemption will be granted at the undergraduate level.
 - The exemption will be granted on a substantive basis and for relevant courses.
 - As a rule, exemptions will not be granted for basic, core, or introductory courses.
4. The CHE did not limit the types of training, and therefore it is possible to grant an exemption from academic studies based on non-academic courses such as a paramedics course, a programming course, a fitness instructors course, a mediation course, acting studies, engineering studies, and more, as long as the institution granting the degree complies with the sections of the CHE decision.
5. The tender was reviewed by the CHE before its publication and it complies with the CHE's decisions. The courses taught by the military as part of the tender will not necessarily be recognized as courses that entitle one to an exemption from academic studies.”

Tel Aviv University responded to the claims in the report:

“Tel Aviv University is very proud that the IDF chose it to serve as the academic home for the Erez program, the new elite program for training the senior command staff of the ground forces. The students are integrated into a variety of fields in dual-major tracks in social sciences, management, sciences, high-tech, and of course humanities. We see this as another expression of the university's contribution to the strength and development

of society and the state. As for the claims in the report – it should be emphasized that the university completely rejects the false claims in the report and the biased quotes attributed to the Dean of Humanities. The program was approved in accordance with all university procedures. The program was first approved by the faculty management of the Faculty of Humanities and then approved by a majority vote in the Faculty Council.”

Bar-Ilan University responded to the claims in the report:

“At Bar-Ilan University, students from all sectors of Israeli society study and we are very proud of that. Jews, Muslims, Christians, Druze from Israel, and also students from about 60 countries around the world. All of the above study, research and also live in the newest and most advanced student housing in Israel.

Among our students are also many who were recruited for reserve duty following the Black Sabbath on October 7 and they combine security requirements with academic life.

Regarding the claim about preference in student housing, it is important to note that Bar-Ilan University operates according to the provisions of the law passed by the Knesset. The number of reserve-duty days is a variable that helps in prioritizing admission. But it is not a condition for admission but a prioritization according to the law.

The claim of discrimination is not based on any facts or data, since some of the student housing residents in the 2024–2025 academic year did not serve and do not serve in the reserves.”

The Technion responded to the claims in the report:

“Since its inception, the Technion, the first Hebrew university, has operated out of a national-Zionist mission, and we are very proud of our educational role and our contribution to Israeli society, its economy, and its security. In this mission, we fulfill the vision of Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, who said that “a high-level technological institute is one of the most vital needs for the State of Israel at this time. We, a small and poor nation, our country is mostly desolate, we live among hostile nations that threaten our existence. We are commanded to need the newest achievements in both theoretical and applied science and the finest technological improvements. Our great and urgent needs require us to reach as quickly as possible the peaks of science and technological refinement that the most developed and richest nations have reached. [Therefore, we must act] to develop the Technion in Haifa and cultivate it into a high-level technological institute in the State of Israel.”

The Technion opened its doors exactly 100 years ago, 24 years before the declaration of independence of the State of Israel. “It’s a good thing the Technion was established 24 years before 1948, and thus laid the foundation for the state,” said the ninth President of the State of Israel, Shimon Peres, of blessed memory, during one of his last visits to the Technion.

Most of the industry in the State of Israel, including the high-tech sector, began at the Technion – with faculty members, graduates, and students who dedicated years to the development of groundbreaking technologies that contributed to all of humanity. There is almost no field in the country where the Technion’s fingerprint is not evident: the food industries, the chemical industry, defense technologies such as Iron Dome, medicine and biomedical engineering, architecture, the aeronautics and space industry, software and hardware, nanoelectronics, quantum, and civilian infrastructures such as the National Water Carrier, bridges, roads, and green energy. It is not for nothing that the President of the Technion often says that he does not know of any other university in the world that has influenced and continues to influence the country in which it operates to such a great extent.

A recent report by the Neaman Institute presents some of the data that supports this claim: Technion graduates played a central role in the establishment and/or management of more than a thousand start-up companies in the years 2015-2022 alone – this is a quarter of the companies that were established during that period. The Technion is the leading university in the number of graduates working at Amazon, Nvidia, Apple, Intel, and more. We are proud of this tremendous contribution to Israel’s economy and no less so, to its security.

The educational programs you mentioned in the report have no military aspect, they are scientific-technological training programs that will help the State of Israel maintain technological and scientific leadership that will ensure its security. The Technion, as a Zionist institution operating out of a historical and national mission, will continue to train the future generation of engineers and scientists in the State of Israel and strengthen Israeli society in all its aspects.”

The Hebrew University responded to the claims in the report:

“General reference to the military programs at the Hebrew University:

At the Hebrew University, there are five academic programs in collaboration with the IDF: Tzameret (medicine), Bina (dentistry), Pisga (nursing), Havatzalot (Middle East studies combined with another degree), and Talpiot (natural sciences). In all cases, these are regular academic programs, in which the students in the program study together

with the other students. If training on military-related topics is given in these programs, it is given outside the curriculum and is not the responsibility of the Hebrew University. If we take the Havatzalot program as an example, all the students in the program could have been admitted separately to studies at the Hebrew University, regardless of the IDF. In most countries around the world, soldiers study for a degree at universities, like regular civilians.

Regarding the Havatzalot program:

The university did not ignore the opposition of the faculty and students regarding the move. The issue was raised for discussion and a vote, both in the university's Standing Committee (the supreme academic committee) and in the University Senate. Different positions were heard, including objections. The program was approved by a large majority vote, both in the Standing Committee and in the Senate. It should be emphasized that the students in the program are students in every respect, and they are not given any priority over other students. The admission of students from the Havatzalot program to studies at the Hebrew University did not come at the expense of the admission of other students. We have enough room for everyone.

Regarding the Talpiot program:

The students in the Talpiot program are also regular students, who complete a regular academic degree in natural sciences with us. There is no training for the development of weapons at the Hebrew University, and we do not have such a degree.

Regarding the Israel Aerospace Industries:

The Hebrew University does not develop weapons systems, not with the Israel Aerospace Industries nor with any other body.

As for the claim that the Hebrew University's registration form requires filling in details about military service - this is a complete falsehood. There is no question about military service on the registration form.”