

**Open Letter**  
**TWELVE MONTHS OF ONGOING GENOCIDE IN PALESTINE**

**ISS COMMITTEE FOR PALESTINE**

This October marks one year since Israel began its genocidal aggression against 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza. The failure to hold Israel accountable for its ongoing violation of international law, international humanitarian law, war crimes, and crimes against humanity has emboldened Israel and provided it with impunity and an enabling environment to escalate and expand its lethal military aggression in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) to the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and to Lebanon, Yemen, and Syria, plunging the region into the abyss.

Over the last year, day after day, we witnessed the annihilation of thousands of innocent lives (most of which are women and children, beside significant numbers of journalists and aid workers) and the systematic and deliberate obliteration and destruction of essential infrastructure, including the education system in Gaza. [UN experts](#) have described Israel's deliberate policy of destruction of the Education system as 'scholasticide', where students, teachers, and professors are arrested, detained, and killed, and universities and schools - some funded by European Union (EU) taxpayers' money- are destroyed and demolished. Since Israel's aggression on Gaza, it is estimated that "[more than 5,479 students, 261 teachers, and 95 professors have been killed in Gaza, and over 7,819 students and 756 teachers have been injured – with numbers growing each day](#)" (The Guardian, 2024). All of Gaza's universities, 12 in total, have been damaged or destroyed, in addition to public libraries, archives, cultural sites, and museums.

In the face of Israel's ongoing genocidal assault, we, students, alumni and staff of the International Institute for Social Studies (ISS) at Erasmus University Rotterdam, are dismayed at the university's inaction and failure to take any effective measures that reflect the demands of student encampments, staff members, and students at the EUR calling for an academic boycott of Israeli universities and academic institutions that are directly and indirectly complicit in supporting Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza and in perpetuating and enshrining Israel's settler colonial apartheid regime in the oPt.

The Executive Board's response to EUR-wide demands through the establishment of an Advisory Committee on Sensitive Collaborations (ACSC) to assess the academic boycott of Israeli institutions has been a disappointment, to say the least. After months of summer break and deliberations, on September 5<sup>th</sup>, ACSC issued a preliminary advice on cooperation with partners in Israel and Palestine. Wrongfully equating Israel and Palestine in their assessment, the ACSC suggested that new partnerships should be frozen and existing partnerships will be assessed. In a published statement, on the [EUR portal](#), it was announced that "[t]he Executive Board intends to adopt the advice and will discuss it with the deans. More time is needed to assess the existing partnerships. In the coming months, the committee will analyse each of these partnerships in more depth on the basis of the framework for the committee's work, resulting in a concrete recommendation for each cooperation partner."

We find this recommendation groundless regarding Palestine, especially since the inclusion of Palestinian universities in the mandate of the committee was never called for. Furthermore, it is

shocking that EUR perpetuates the “both-siding” Israel-Palestine narrative, despite the clear asymmetry between the occupying power Israel, a state with one of the strongest militaries in the world, and the oPt. The UNGA recently adopted a resolution calling for the implementation of the International Court of Justice’s (ICJ) July advisory opinion that demanded Israel to end its unlawful 57-year occupation of the oPt within 12 months. As part of this resolution, Third states have a responsibility under international law to immediately cease all forms of aid and assistance that enables Israel to maintain its unlawful occupation. This decision is a further affirmation of the grave situation and the illegality of Israel’s occupation and practices. On the 26 January 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), determined that Israel's severe assault on the Palestinian people in Gaza, marked by unprecedented levels of indiscriminate violence against civilians, likely constitutes genocide under the Genocide Convention. This ruling mandates that all signatory states of the Genocide Convention, including the Netherlands, take measures to prevent the crime of genocide. The UN's top court ruling, at least, should have been a starting point for Dutch universities to reconsider their ties with Israeli institutions.

There is sufficient evidence that Israeli academia has been [deeply embedded](#) in the Israeli state, implicated in decades of Palestinian dispossession, and [collaborating](#) with Israeli military and weapon companies. Maya Wind’s [“Towers of Ivory and Steel”](#) (published in February 2024), for example, offers meticulous insights into this evidence. As a matter of fact, there should have been a reevaluation of academic ties long before the ongoing military assault began. We are outraged over the lack of urgency on the part of ISS and the Erasmus executive board as Israel continues its bombardment and collective punishment of Palestinians, and its 76-year history of brutal settler-colonialism, apartheid, and military occupation of Palestine. The ACSC latest advisory opinion reveals the university’s deliberate stalling of any meaningful action and unwillingness to act on the demands presented by our community.

For decades, the ISS has been renowned for its critical-activist scholarship, attracting engaged students from around the globe and in this case too we refuse to be complicit in Israel’s illegal occupation and system of apartheid. At ISS level, so far, there has been tremendous support and efforts from a significant portion of the ISS faculty to speak out against the ongoing genocide, especially at a time when freedom of expression is under pressure and support for Palestinians’ rights is quickly misconstrued as anti-Semitism. As a matter of fact, ISS has strong ties with Palestinian academic institutions and no institutional ties with Israeli academic institutions for the above mentioned reasons. This has been the moral compass in making decisions on building institutional ties with Israeli and Palestinian academic institutions and will remain so in the face of scholasticide against Palestinian knowledge institutions.

Ultimately, we the undersigned (staff, students, and alumni) refuse to accept that Palestine becomes the exception to our shared values of humanity and justice. Education for Palestinians since the Nakba in 1948 has been [“not just a means of imparting knowledge, but a vital pillar of their existence and a beacon of hope for the Palestinian people”](#) (Al Jazeera, 2024). We believe we have a duty to support Palestinians’ right to education. Therefore, we call the EUR executive board and all the deans to take the moral lead among Dutch academic institutions and universities to reject the equal treatment of Israeli and Palestinian universities in decisions of collaboration, muster the courage to resist the stance adopted by Dutch universities’ boards, and to uphold the critical voice and leadership that we know and value at ISS. Regardless of the EUR-level decision, the ISS will continue to live up to its reputation

of standing against colonialism and supporting the self-determination and liberation of the Palestinian people. We hope that this commitment is also reflected in the institute's (public) position on the matter.