

Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Report for Swedish Universities

Workers and Students in Swedish
Academia for Palestine (WASSAP)

August 2024



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Introduction:

The Crisis of Academic Freedom in a Time of Genocide

Academic freedom is currently in crisis due to the total eradication of all institutions of higher education in Gaza, alongside the murder of many thousands of university students and staff, which the United Nations has deemed “scholasticide” (OHCHR 2024). The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (20 May 2024)—specifically targeting the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant—has indirectly charged the Israeli government and military (IDF) with wilfully causing great suffering, using starvation as a method of warfare, murdering civilians, extermination, and other war crimes and crimes against humanity.

In addition to the overwhelming destruction of life and social infrastructure in Gaza, all of the occupied Palestinian region’s twelve universities have been destroyed, leaving its 90,000 students with no place to study. It is not possible for Palestinians to leave Gaza, so there is no place of refuge for these displaced students, academics, and other members of university staff. There is now very limited food available and almost no clean water, with the polio virus having been found in Gaza’s suspended sewage system.

The official death count in Gaza as a direct result of Israel’s military attacks stands—as of mid-August 2024—at over 40,000 people, with more than 91,000 people injured and well over 10,000 people missing. This figure, however, is calculated by experts to be a vast underestimation (Khatib 2024), with many thousands more presumed to be buried under the immense residue of destruction that now covers Gaza. The ways in which Sweden and Swedish academia are connected to these atrocities should be a concern for everyone— particularly for those who work in and around institutions of education.

Nonetheless, the Swedish Education Minister, Mats Persson maintains that “Sweden has a long-term interest in deepening the relationship and cooperation with Israel” (our translation; Riksdagen 2024). He continues, Swedish “state universities and colleges have a high degree of self-determination over their activities, and it is not the government’s business to decide which international cooperation projects in education and research they should be part of.” Here, Persson relies on a presupposition of absolute academic freedom to argue that the government cannot and will not decide on the activities of universities. These institutions, in Persson’s statement, are understood as having sufficient autonomy to decide on the extent of their own collaborations.

However, Swedish universities themselves have consistently argued that they cannot make any statement against Israel’s illegal military actions— especially in regard to the eradication of educational infrastructure and

access to study—because their position is synonymous with that of the Swedish state. As we detail in length within this report, the familiar response we and other groups have received to our requests for a denunciation of Israel's destruction of universities in Gaza is that, since Swedish universities are funded and owned by the state, their position is equivalent to that of the government.

When we argued that Swedish universities had taken a clear and immediate stance against Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 when they severed all ties with Russian institutions and offered support to displaced Ukrainian academics and students, the spokespeople for the Swedish universities argued that the situation was different. In that case, the government itself opposed the Russian invasion of Ukraine, so the universities simply followed the official position of the state. On the other hand, in the case of Israel and Palestine, the state sides with Israel, despite Sweden's historical ties with Palestine as the first European Union member to recognize Palestinian statehood (in 2014). Regarding both Russia and Israel, this means that Swedish universities either have fully given up their legally protected autonomy in matters of deciding on international collaborations in individual cases, or that Swedish universities have given up the responsibility to engage in ethical research and scholarship.

As Persson and other government officials have made clear, though, universities are under no obligation to follow the line of the state (Riksdag 2024). Indeed, in autumn 2023, when the Swedish government proposed its controversial "whistleblower law [*angiverilagen*]", which would require academics to report on any student they suspected of not having the appropriate visa to remain in Sweden, universities explicitly opposed it, and took a stance against the government.

Again and again, in our appeals to Swedish universities, we have received contradictory and illogical refusals to condemn the scholasticide and genocide taking place in Gaza. This report lays out our fundamental demands, the reasons for the necessity of satisfying these demands, and the complex bureaucratic blocks, dismissals, and distractions we have received from universities.

We are Workers and Students in Swedish Academia for Palestine (WASSAP), a network of university students and staff throughout Sweden who pursue support for Palestine and the end to genocide, settler colonialism, and apartheid.

We demand that Swedish universities assert their autonomy by:

- 1. ending all formal collaborations with Israeli universities and other complicit institutions, in accordance with the PACBI guidelines;**
- 2. establishing collaborations with Palestinian universities, including providing meaningful support to displaced Palestinian academics and students, offering them a place to study and work at Swedish universities.**

Section 1: Who Are We and What is a Boycott?

1.1. The Beginnings of WASSAP

WASSAP was set up in October 2023 in response to the latest phase of Israel's occupation of Palestine. WASSAP, alongside Academics for Palestine and other groups, began demanding that Swedish universities assert disagreement publicly with the unimaginably destructive military campaign in Gaza that has killed tens of thousands and eradicated the entire educational infrastructure of the occupied territory, which has been under military blockade since 2007. We also appealed to universities to offer support to dispossessed Palestinian academics and students, as has been offered to Ukrainian academics since Russia's invasion in February 2022.

Despite the refusal of universities to listen to our demands, we have continued to invite students, academics, university staff, and the general public into conversations about colonization, genocide, and racism, with the intention of promoting antiracism. At campuses all over Sweden, we have set up reading groups, open lectures, poetry readings, protests, marches, food and goods exchanges, support services, petitions, and many specific campaigns for the end of colonization, genocide, and scholasticide. In most cases, we have done so alongside other local organisations that stand in solidarity with Palestine, including university staff and students. The immense and tireless work of these other organisations across Swedish universities has both directly and indirectly added to this report.

1.2. The Call to Boycott

The fundamental drive of our program is boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS). BDS is a long-established international movement that seeks to challenge the international legitimacy of the Israeli military regime by encouraging institutions, nations, and companies to cut ties with Israel.

During the South African apartheid, BDS movements had a profound effect on the legitimacy of the racist regime, forcing it into increasing isolation and weakening the possibility of the regime's survival. While it was the struggle of Black South Africans for liberation from apartheid that ultimately ended the brutal regime, BDS campaigns drastically diminished the possibility of apartheid authorities finding international support.

The same international campaign for boycotting Russia has resulted in its disappearance from all international cultural events, severely jeopardizing

its internal propaganda and contributing to a mounting disappointment among Russians with their corrupt governing regime.

Following the unanimous position of critical academic research (Makdisi 2024; Butler 2024; Butler 2023; Loewenstein 2023; Fields 2020; Haugbølle 2024; Stop Wapenhandel et al. 2024; Bertov 2024) and humanitarian organizations (Amnesty International 2022; Al-Haq 2022; UN 2022; ICC 2024; ICJ 2024; B'Tselem n.d.), BDS movements today maintain that Israel is an apartheid state that is currently committing genocide in Gaza. On 19 July 2024, the International Court of Justice deemed Israel's prolonged military occupation of Palestinian territories violating international law, and thus is illegal. This is the first time since 2004 that the ICJ has made such a clear ruling on Israel's illegal occupation, providing evidence that the illegality of Israel's occupation of Gaza did not begin in response to the attacks committed by Hamas against Israel on 7 October 2023. Instead, Israel has been creating and maintaining the conditions of apartheid and illegal occupation for decades.

The academic boycott of Israeli universities and institutions does not seek to boycott individual researchers, but rather to hold accountable Israeli academic institutions that actively support the ongoing oppression and occupation of Palestinians perpetrated by the Israeli state and army. In alignment with the guidelines for the academic boycott of Israel set up by the international Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), initiated in 2004, the boycott does not target individual researchers who are affiliated with Israeli academic institutions but is rather directed towards Israeli academic institutions themselves (PACBI n.d.). The boycott of academic institutions in Israel also subscribes to the definition of academic freedom adopted by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR, E/C.12/1999/10; Scholars at Risk 2023).

In the following section, we detail the ongoing collaborations between Israeli and Swedish universities. Subsequently, we detail the ways in which Israeli universities and institutions have in various forms participated in legitimizing and upholding the illegal occupation of Palestine and the genocide of Palestinians. We also explore how Israeli universities have participated in silencing critical voices among students and staff, thus endangering academic freedom (Adalah 2024).

Section 2: Ongoing Collaborations with Israeli Universities

Since October 2023, WASSAP has been seeking concrete information regarding ongoing collaborations between Swedish and Israeli universities. Students and staff have sent freedom of information requests to their respective universities, but often these requests have been met with silence or explicit refusal, despite universities' legal requirement to fulfil these requests. We have nonetheless found many ongoing collaborations between institutions, both from those universities that did respond to requests and from our own investigations.

Göteborg University listed for us its ongoing EU-financed collaborations with Israeli universities as well as its ongoing student mobility programs. However, since the students and workers that requested this information received contradictory replies, we are not fully confident that this list is exhaustive. In April 2024, only one EU-financed collaboration, HRJUST, was listed by Göteborg University. In separate correspondence in May 2024, the list of research collaborations was longer, however only one student mobility program was disclosed. Among the EU-financed projects are REDRESS (University of Haifa), IRISCC (Ben-Gurion University), HRJUST (University of Haifa), PANACEA (Weizmann Institute), and PRD (Ben-Gurion University). These EU-funded research projects reveal close ties between Swedish and Israeli institutions that span many disciplines. Apart from these projects, Göteborg University maintains two student exchange programs with Israeli universities: one between the School of Business, Economics and Law and the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya (Reichman University), and one between Sahlgrenska Academy and Tel Aviv University.

Karolinska Institute, meanwhile, has two active collaborations, neither of which involves an economic investment. The most recent is a student exchange agreement with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, signed in 2022. Since 2015, Karolinska has also had a research collaboration with the Weizmann Institute of Science (5-86/2014).

Konstfack in Stockholm maintains a collaborative agreement with the Bezalel Academy of Art, despite the request of Konstfack students in April 2024 that they cut this tie in protest against the Bezalel Academy's suspension of numerous Palestinian students in October 2023.

Linköping University has an ongoing agreement with Tel Aviv University (agreement number HMV-2024-00140), despite its own code of research ethics (Dnr LiU 1021/04-60) stating (2.1) that the university will only collaborate with institutions that are "in harmony with democracy and human rights" and "promote sustainable development at global and local level."

Since 2007, Malmö University has had an extensive agreement with Ben-Gurion University, spanning research collaborations and staff and student

exchanges, with the host university offering support to incoming staff and students (79-07/399).

Stockholm University has an agreement of cooperation with Tel Aviv University, a student exchange program with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (renewed May 2023), a Memorandum of Understanding with Bert Berl College since 2021, a student exchange agreement (for up to 2 students per year) between the law departments and the University of Haifa, and an exchange agreement between Stockholm Business School and the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya. Additionally, the department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies has an exchange agreement with the Faculty of Humanities at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, renewed on 10 February, 2023.

Information from Uppsala University has been particularly difficult to attain, with administrators claiming the university does not have a centralized list of all collaborations, and that it is each department's responsibility to provide a list of their own collaborations. However, many departments have not responded to our legally binding requests to disclose their ties. From the institutions that did respond, we discovered an Erasmus exchange program with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJI), a collaboration between the Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry and HUJI, a collaboration between the Department of Ecology and Genetics and Tel Aviv University, and a collaboration between the Department of Chemistry and Tel Aviv University.

Lund University has active collaborations with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Ben-Gurion University, the Israeli Institute of Technology (Technion), and the Weizmann Institute of Science. There is a student exchange agreement with the Faculty of Humanities and Theology at HUJI, which is currently paused due to security concerns. The faculty of natural sciences has EU projects (Horizon Europe) with Ben-Gurion University. Lund Faculty of Engineering (LTH; part of Lund University) also has a Horizon Europe project with Technion Research and Development Foundation. The faculty of Law has a shared Erasmus+ project with HUJI. The Faculty of Medicine has an agreement with the Weizmann Institute of Science.

Chalmers University of Technology is currently a part of the Integrated sensing and communications for future vehicular systems (ISLANDS) doctoral network, which is done in collaboration with Weizmann Institute of Science. Further, researchers from Chalmers work on the AutoPiM: Efficient Accelerator for Autonomous Vehicles project in an Israeli-Swedish Research Collaboration with researchers from the Engineering Faculty at Bar-Ilan University.

Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) has had numerous collaborations with Israeli universities. Currently, KTH is involved in the SoftEnable Horizon Europe project, which is done in collaboration with Technion Israel Institute of Technology, and has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Örebro University maintains a student mobility program with Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Section 3: Why Cut Ties with Israeli Institutions?

3.1. Universities' Position

Many universities' Vice Chancellors (VCs) have emphasized in their responses to WASSAP that research is by its very nature global, with the aim of advancing knowledge, without political boundaries. However, all Swedish universities immediately suspended research ties with Russian universities after the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. In this instance, even if the decision by universities in some cases seems to have been motivated mainly by government directive, the ethical stance that requires institutions not to directly support violent regimes took precedence over the global and neutral nature of research.

In those instances in which collaboration is equivalent to support for a violent and, illegal invasion, the nature of research is no longer neutral, and decisions must be taken that limit the complicity of Swedish institutions in war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Our research demonstrates that there is significant collaboration between Swedish and Israeli universities. Furthermore, the reluctance of some universities to fully disclose the collaborations is cause for concern. If collaboration agreements meet a university's ethical guidelines, universities should have no reason to hide the existence, extent, and content of these agreements from its own inquiring researchers. Moreover, this information is public, and universities are under a legal obligation to disclose when requested.

Given the extent of the collaborations we have uncovered, we are deeply troubled by Swedish universities' absolute refusal to acknowledge the importance of cutting ties with institutions closely connected to illegal occupation, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. To emphasise the importance of cutting ties and maintaining an ethical stance towards international research—a stance that emphasises the right of all to live and to study without military occupation or scholasticide—in the rest of this section we detail the complicity of Israeli institutions in the violence and vast destruction committed daily by the Israeli military.

3.2. The Complicity of Israeli Universities

As stipulated in several UN resolutions, Israel has been in breach of international law since the Nakba of 1948 (United Nations General Assembly 1949, 1976, 1980, 2002, 2004, 2017, 2014 and United Nations Security Council 1967). The Nakba, named after al-Nakba, which means "the Catastrophe", refers to the ongoing displacement and dispossession

of Palestinians from historic Palestine, beginning in 1948 and continuing as the structural denial of Palestinian self-determination through military occupation, mass incarceration, and the explicit ideology of Jewish supremacy (Eghbariah 2024).

In the latest phase of the Nakba, Israel is systematically destroying all conditions for Palestinian life in Gaza. On 26 January 2024, the International Court of Justice found that there is a plausible case that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza (Euro-Med Monitor 2024). Furthermore, Israel continues to break international law by denying Palestinian refugees their right of return as stipulated in UN resolution 194 (Quigley 2007) and continuing to illegally occupy the Occupied Palestinian Territories (the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip) and the occupied Golan Heights, breaking UN resolution 242 (Quigley 2007).

These acts are directly supported by Israeli universities, which develop the technology and machinery for war, and contribute to juridical, operational, and technological support for the continued occupation of Palestine.

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem supports "Operation Iron Sword" (the IDF's code name for their current operation in Gaza) by "providing military units with logistics equipment" (HUJI 2023). It also suspended Palestinian professor Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, under the justification that the suspension would "preserve a safe climate on campus" (BRISMES 2023; Odeh 2024). Hebrew University has been pressuring Shalhoub-Kevorkian to resign since late October 2023, after she signed a call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. Professor Shalhoub-Kevorkian's research has provided invaluable insights into the psychological and social ramifications of living under prolonged conflict and oppression. While Hebrew University has since lifted her suspension, the threat of suspension nonetheless sends a clear message to scholars at the Hebrew University and worldwide, especially scholars critical of the Israeli genocide in Gaza and who call for a ceasefire (Sfard 2023; BRISMES 2023).

Hebrew University is partly built in East Jerusalem, which is illegally occupied according to international law (Wind 2024). In 1967, when Israel occupied East Jerusalem, it annexed three quarters of the lands of the Palestinian village Issawiyeh to expand Hebrew University and to build Israeli settlements (Wind 2024). Today, Israel has expropriated over 90 percent of Issawiyeh's lands (Wind 2024).

Tel Aviv University has exceptionally close ties to the Israeli government and the military industry (Rapoport 2023). Tel Aviv University hosts the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), which aims to shape the "national security policies" of the regime. One of these was formulated during the 2021 attack on Gaza and argued for denying the entry of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian population as a military strategy (Riemer 2023), something we now see after 7 October 2023. Tel Aviv University also developed the Dahiya Doctrine in partnership with the Israeli military in 2008 (Rogers 2023), which calls for targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure with "disproportionate force" to inflict devastating destruction. This is a war crime. Nevertheless, this doctrine has been used in all subsequent military attacks on Gaza, including the current genocide.

Another academic institution that has deep ties to Israeli military is Technion. It helped develop the D9 remote-controlled bulldozer, which has been used throughout both historical Palestine before 1967 and the Occupied Palestinian Territories since to destroy and demolish Palestinian homes. In 2008 Technion opened a centre for the development of electro-optics with Elbit Systems, one of the largest Israeli weapons companies. It also developed "The Scream", an acoustic weapon that creates sound levels unbearable to humans at distances of up to 100 metres. This weapon has been widely used to suppress Palestinian protests. It can cause a shock that could lead to a heart attack (Loewenstein 2023; Weizman 2017).

The University of Haifa is responsible for training officers of the Israeli military since 2018, offering a master's program in national security for members of the Israeli military and Israeli intelligence services such as Mossad and Shin Bet (Heights 2018). It hosts an "Ambassadors online" course that aims to provide students with "Hasbara" training in collaboration with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, furthering the spread of pro-Israel propaganda. It also stated on its website that it stands with "IDF officers, soldiers and the entire state of Israel" in the current war on Gaza.

University of Haifa hosts three Israeli military colleges comprising the Israeli Military Academic Complex, which the university states "form the backbone of the IDF's elite training programs" (Heights 2018). The University of Haifa holds courses at the Israeli military base of Gilot. It has provided equipment to soldiers carrying out the genocide in Gaza and established an emergency fund to provide stipends to student soldiers.

Relatedly, Bar-Ilan University's Engineering Faculty has had "hackathons" in collaboration with the Israeli military and with the Israeli arms producer Elbit (Faculty of Engineering Bar-Ilan University 2023a, 2023b). Importantly, they established a college—now the independent Ariel University—on illegally occupied Palestinian land. Such settlements constitute war crimes under international law. The Weizmann Institute of Science has been a "military-scientific center of the Israeli state" (Wind 2024: 91). Faculty and senior administrators have led the development of Israeli military industries (Wind 2024).

3.3. The General Problem of Israeli Educational Institutions

Israeli universities point to their Arab (Palestinian) students as proof of their plurality and diversity. However, Palestinian students have long been criminalized and targeted by their universities (Memo 2014; New Arab 2023; Adalah 2024; Gordon and Green 2024). This has only increased since Hamas' attack on Israel on 7 October 2023.

At the University of Haifa, over 90 percent of the students summoned to disciplinary committees between 2002 and 2010 were Palestinian. Between 2010 and 2015, Palestinian students were three times as likely

as Jewish students to be summoned before their committees (Gordon and Green 2024; Adalah UN Report 2024).

What we have described here is only a very brief overview. As Israeli scholar Maya Wind (2024: 12) meticulously documented, all eight major public Israeli universities “operate in direct service of the state and serve critical functions in sustaining its policies, and thereby constitute central pillars of Israeli settler colonialism.”

In this section, we have demonstrated the various ways in which Israeli universities contribute to the oppression of Palestinians, the current genocide in Gaza, and the breaking of international law. Continued collaboration with these institutions not only normalizes their actions but enables them. An academic boycott is necessary, both to protect scholars in Sweden from working on projects that break international law, and to enact positive change by helping to dismantle the system of oppression, destruction, and apartheid that the state of Israel maintains against Palestine and Palestinians.

In the following section, we advocate for the academic boycott of Israeli institutions by examining the legal frameworks governing institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and responsibility, alongside the ethical standards upheld by Swedish universities. We also identify inconsistencies and contradictions in the public and internal communications from universities and the Swedish Ministry of Education.

Section 4: Swedish Universities' Responsibility

Guidelines for responsible internationalization clearly mandate that formal agreements with complicit Israeli institutions should be terminated. However, at the time of writing, no Swedish university has cancelled its formal collaborations with these institutions. The VCs of Swedish universities have not sufficiently addressed these contradictions in their communications with the public, students, and staff. Furthermore, the Minister of Education, Mats Persson, has maintained an inappropriate and strong political presence in university affairs throughout the ongoing genocide. In this section, we analyse the inadequacies and contradictions in the responses from VCs and the Minister of Education regarding the ongoing crisis, in light of their ethical and political responsibilities. In our study of communications with universities, we analyze patterns of argumentation to better understand this current moment of political and ethical impasse in the face of ongoing genocide.

Our findings suggest that the inaction of Swedish universities is partly due to confusion regarding the extent of university autonomy in relation to the Swedish government and the Minister of Education. VCs across Swedish universities have consistently asserted a lack of autonomy from the government. At various times, Persson has publicly reinforced this argument, contributing to the ongoing confusion and political stalemate. However, following significant critique from the public, as well as from students and staff at Swedish universities, and after a formal complaint against Persson was lodged with the Swedish Constitutional Committee (Konstitutionsutskottet), the majority of VCs and the Minister of Education have refrained from these direct claims of lack of autonomy.

Indirect claims of lack of autonomy nonetheless persist. It is clear that Swedish universities have the formal capacity to cancel institutional ties with Israeli universities. Despite this formal capacity, universities have failed to take action. As we show in this section, the justifications they offer for this inaction are inadequate. This ongoing failure suggests that VCs, constrained by bureaucratic caution and lacking the courage to act independently, are unwilling to uphold the principles of sound knowledge, ethical integrity, and academic freedom in the face of scholasticide and humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza.

4.1. Autonomy, Academic Freedom, and Research Ethics in Swedish and International Law

The autonomy of Swedish universities is safeguarded by multiple legal provisions. Notably, the freedom of research is enshrined in the Swedish Constitution (Regeringsformen, Chapter 2, Section 18) and the EU Charter

of Fundamental Rights (Article 13), which affirm that scientific research shall be free, and that academic freedom shall be respected. The Higher Education Act (Högskolelagen) (Chapter 1, Section 6) further mandates that promoting and safeguarding academic freedom is a fundamental principle guiding universities' activities. Notably, the preparatory works for the Higher Education Act (Prop. 2020/21:60), which in the Swedish legal translation are of central importance to the interpretation of law, state clearly that: "It is the responsibility of each respective institution to determine how the university's international activities should be conducted within the framework of its mission and based on the specific conditions prevailing at the institution" (our translation; 2020: 182), and that "the higher education institution is best suited to and should assess how its international activities contribute to high quality and sustainable development both nationally and globally" (183).

Furthermore, the academic freedom and institutional autonomy of Swedish higher education institutions must be exercised within the boundaries of existing legal frameworks and value foundations. Specifically, the Higher Education Act (Chapter 1, Section 5) requires universities to promote sustainable development in their activities: "Universities shall, in their activities, promote sustainable development to ensure that present and future generations are guaranteed a healthy and good environment, economic and social welfare, and justice."

Specifically aimed towards responsible internationalization, the same section stipulates: "All international activities at each university should both enhance the quality of the university's education and research, and contribute nationally and globally to the sustainable development referred to in the first paragraph." As the section indicates, universities are bound to ensure a healthy and good environment, economic and social welfare, and justice for current and future generations, on both a global and a national level. The values underpinning all activities of the university are pivotal to the purpose and structure of academic freedom. If these values are not adhered to, one cannot be sure that academic freedom is sufficiently protected.

Other than this general legal framework, the Swedish constitution and Swedish administrative law practice specifically prohibit ministerial rule. Additionally, the Administrative Procedure Act (Förvaltningslagen) (2017: 900; §22) mandates that all cases concerning university autonomy should be handled impartially and objectively, further safeguarding the independence of universities. Concerns about potential ministerial rule arose when allegations surfaced that the Minister of Education, Mats Persson, instructed university VCs not to take a stance on the ongoing conflict in Palestine. We will return to this issue later in this section. The prohibition of ministerial rule is clearly articulated in the Instrument of Government (Chapter 12, Section 2), which states that no public authority, including parliament or municipal decision-making bodies, may dictate how an administrative authority shall decide in a particular case concerning the exercise of public authority or the application of law. Authorities, including universities and colleges, are expected to act

independently in their decision-making, and principles of impartiality and the prohibition against ministerial rule are designed to ensure the independence and impartiality of authorities.

4.2. Autonomy, Academic Freedom and Research Ethics in University Policy and Practice

State universities, which constitute the vast majority in Sweden, are often treated as administrative authorities, or *förvaltningsmyndigheter*. That said, the practice of academic freedom has historically been relatively strong in Sweden, with high levels of collegial co-determination (*kollegialt medbestämmande*). Nevertheless, universities are increasingly viewed and managed through an administrative-political lens. This shift increasingly formalizes the legal relationship of universities to the state as one of compliance, rather than autonomy (Ahlbäck Öberg 2023: 19). While Swedish universities are vigorously resisting these trends, their inaction regarding the genocide in Palestine represents a significant loss for academic freedom and integrity.

The increasing bureaucratization of Swedish higher education, which threatens the core values of autonomy and integrity, was highlighted in a May 2024 report by the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) (Swedish Higher Education Authority 2024). The report identified political and administrative control of universities as the greatest threat to academic freedom, closely followed by the increasingly privatized system of research funding, and by a tendency within collegial contexts toward uniformity and conformity. WASSAP understands these trends as creating a widespread fear within the university of publicly standing in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

While the report suggests that half the faculty members at Swedish universities believe academic freedom is under serious threat, it found no evidence that so-called cancel culture is a significant issue. The alleged prevalence of cancel culture was a key motivation behind the report initiated by the current Minister of Education, Mats Persson. During his time in office, Persson has also increased political control over appointments to university boards, leading to criticism from the Constitutional Committee (KU) for overstepping his authority. Under the pretext of an increased risk to general university security and concerns about so-called cancel culture, the current government is rapidly undermining academic freedom and university autonomy. As we show in the following sections, this trend has exacerbated during the course of the genocide in Gaza.

Universities, VCs, and The Swedish Association of Higher Education Institutions (SUHF), as the association representing these institutions, consistently emphasize the importance of defending academic freedom in public discourse and legislative processes. They also actively work to strengthen the formal protections for this freedom. A recent report by SUHF states: "The right of universities and colleges to self-determination needs clearer and stronger constitutional protection" (Ekberg 2024: 5).

The norm of minimal governmental influence on academia has been put forth as a guarantor of academic autonomy when new legislations to formalize autonomy have been proposed (Ahlbäck Öberg 2023). Moreover, on 28 April 2023, all VCs of Swedish universities rallied behind a protest letter against Persson's decision to shorten the mandate period for university boards, arguing that this change undermines the autonomy and long-term stability of university governance (Gothenburg University 2023), calling it "an extremely dangerous development" (our translation).

In signing a recent charter of academic principles—the Magna Charta Universitatum (2020: 1)—Swedish universities affirm that "intellectual and moral autonomy is the hallmark of any university and a precondition for the fulfilment of its responsibilities to society." and that "independence needs to be recognised and protected by governments and society at large, and defended vigorously by institutions themselves." Without intellectual, moral, and academic autonomy, the university cannot function as a university. The persistent stance that Swedish universities cannot independently manage and determine their own collaborations, and that they are absolved by government policy from taking responsibility for the ethical position of these collaborations, stands in direct opposition to the principles, values, and responsibilities outlined in the 2020 charter. This position not only contradicts the fundamental meaning of academic freedom and the autonomy of research but also fails to meet the ethical standards expected by staff and students. The universities' reluctance to sever ties with institutions complicit in acts of scholasticide and genocide threatens the academic freedom of researchers in Sweden, who are left uncertain about their institutions' moral autonomy to reject violence and advocate for the survival of academics and the independence of their research.

On the notion of research ethics, the SUHF plays a crucial role in shaping policies and guidelines that govern the operations of higher education institutions in Sweden. One significant contribution from SUHF is the "Checklist for Global Responsible Engagement", a document designed to guide Swedish universities in navigating the complexities of international collaborations. This checklist outlines ethical considerations, emphasizing the importance of aligning global engagements with the principles of human rights, academic freedom, and democratic values. The document is widely regarded as a key framework for ensuring responsible and sustainable internationalization within Swedish higher education.

The majority of Swedish universities have adopted this checklist or have aligned their policies with the principles it outlines. This adoption underscores a collective commitment among Swedish higher education institutions to uphold ethical standards in their international partnerships.

There are clear ethical issues regarding academic collaborations with Israeli universities when read in relation to SUHF's "Checklist for Global Responsible Engagement". According to the first indicator on the list, collaborations should not occur in countries "where democratic freedom and rights are restricted, or where violations of human rights or academic freedom are well documented" (SUHF 2023: 1). The second indicator in

the checklist encourages universities to consider potential ethical or reputational risks associated with their partners, asking, "What is the partner's relation with the government and political parties in the partner country? Will the project, or any activity related to the project, be in conflict with your institution's core values?" (2023: 2.)

Since the adoption of this checklist by many Swedish universities in their ethical policy frameworks, several international authorities and courts of universal jurisdiction have clearly demonstrated that Israeli universities frequently operate against values of human rights and equality. These institutions include the ICJ, the ICC, and the United Nation General Assembly. Swedish universities often claim neutrality, yet their research, teaching, institutional funding, and pension ties with entities that support the illegal occupation and human rights violations in Palestine, and now particularly the genocide and scholasticide in Gaza, tell a different story. As we have shown, Israeli universities currently engage in direct, open, and partisan support of the Israeli state during the ongoing genocide. This raises serious ethical concerns that Swedish institutions must address, especially given their own ethical guidelines, as set out in the SUHF checklist.

In March 2024, SUHF published a report titled *Ställningstagande om Akademisk Frihet och Autonomi*, or *Statement on Academic Freedom and Autonomy*, in which Swedish universities collectively emphasized the urgent need for greater autonomy from governmental control. However, in their public responses, all VC statements have consistently denied responsibility and rejected their capability to act, arguing that they lack autonomy in relation to the government.

In their communications, VCs claim that universities are both (1) autonomously bound to the promotion of academic freedom according to democratic principles throughout the world, which is conducted through ethical research, and (2) bound to the decisions of the government, which it is their institutional duty to represent. Clearly, both cannot be the case. Either the university is a political public institution under an ethical obligation to promote and facilitate academic freedom, or it is entirely determined by the position of the government and the dictates of the current Minister of Education. To claim that the university cannot engage in the demands of students and staff without government direction contradicts the academic freedom and legal autonomy that SUHF has repeatedly emphasized. Universities cannot simultaneously claim to champion academic freedom and autonomy while also insisting that they are powerless to change or cancel formal international agreements without government direction.

4.3. Coordinated University Responses

Over the course of the academic year 2023–2024, VCs have made numerous statements regarding their inability to act in relation to the

ongoing genocide. These statements are strikingly uniform, using almost exactly the same wording from university to university.

During the earlier stages of the genocide, all university VCs in our data expressed an inability to take action, either by citing a lack of autonomy from the government, or by stating that academic boycott would fall outside the remit of their formal competences. However, as the genocide progressed, and especially following nationwide student protests and public criticism from university students and staff, VCs have shifted their stance. The most common argument centres on a particular understanding of academic freedom, founded on the freedom of individual researchers to engage in any collaborations of their choosing. However, the argument that foreign politics is the sole concern of the government, instead of academia, is still prevalent. In this way, universities absolve themselves of the responsibility to address the ongoing genocide, keeping with the official line of the Swedish government, while maintaining a stance of "apolitical neutrality". Prevalent also is the trend to obscure and downplay the acute moral implications of the genocide by, for example, referring to it as the "war between Israel and Hamas". In this and other ways, universities frame the genocide in alignment with the government's narrative.

WASSAP has collected and analysed communications from VCs of the following universities: Malmö University, Karlstad University, Umeå University, Stockholm University, Uppsala University, Södertörn University, Lund University, the University of Gothenburg, Linnaeus University (LNU), Linköping University, and the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH). The communications consist of statements in media directed at the general public, statements directed to students and staff, as well as communications between VCs and the negotiation teams at several student protest camps set up across Sweden.

In order to keep this report concise, we are highlighting only a few responses from the huge number of emails, communications, and meetings that have taken place since October 2023. A consistent feature of all the responses we have received from VCs, especially in the more recent phases of the genocide, is—as Uppsala University's VC Anders Hagfeldt wrote on 8 February 2024—that the University only considers making a statement when the issue concerns academia. We often express our opinion when the freedom of research is under threat and when the ability of our colleagues to pursue research and studies throughout the world is restricted – something I assume that everyone at the University endorses. In such cases, we have a voice and a natural commitment.

The clear message here is that the university has sufficient autonomy to make decisions and take political positions regarding threats to academic freedom when they arise in the world. At the emergence of its necessity, the university takes a political position.

Immediately, a central contradiction becomes clear. As we documented in Section 1 above, a more dire and drastic situation regarding academic freedom is scarcely imaginable than that currently taking place in Gaza specifically and Palestine generally. As mentioned already, the current situation has been described by numerous international authorities

as scholasticide, which adds to the many documented war crimes and crimes against humanity that international courts have found the state of Israel to be committing in its current offensive (Wind 2024). If this is not a situation in which the university has “a voice and a natural commitment” to condemn scholasticide, promote academic freedom, and offer support to displaced and dispossessed academics and students, then no such situation is imaginable.

So far, insufficient information has been provided regarding the decision-making process or rationale behind Swedish universities’ alignment with the Swedish government’s position. The lines of argumentation of VCs demonstrate striking similarity among each other and with those of Persson, in what they express as well as in their silence. By the time of writing, no university has directly addressed the ethical concerns raised by university students and staff. Instead, they consistently deflect these arguments by invoking their own understanding of the principle of academic freedom.

4.4. Vice Chancellor’s Lines of Argumentation

The analysis of the lines of argumentation presented by the universities in response to demands regarding the genocide reveals a consistent pattern: VCs frame their position through the lens of an institutional lack of autonomy and academic freedom, which they claim limits their ability to independently take a stance against genocide. Universities emphasize their role as neutral entities focused on education and research, rather than foreign policy. They justify their refusal to sever ties with Israeli institutions by stating that they are bound by the government’s lack of directives on the matter, using this as an excuse when confronted with their actions following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This narrative is reinforced by repeated references to their adherence to government guidelines and policies, particularly in relation to international collaborations and geopolitical conflicts.

A significant aspect of the universities' argumentation is that maintaining neutrality is essential to protect the diversity of opinions and the free exchange of ideas within academic spaces. Furthermore, they uphold a narrow and, as we will argue, counterproductive interpretation of academic freedom as allowing individual researchers to choose their collaborators without institutional interference. This position allows them to avoid direct engagement with the ethical implications of their formalized partnerships with Israeli institutions, framing such decisions as matters of individual academic judgement rather than institutional responsibility. By reframing institutional ties as the immaterial “exchange of ideas” or a matter of individual choice and judgement, VCs effectively make invisible the considerable economic and ideological ties to complicit Israeli higher education institutions that such collaborations entail on an institutional level.

In light of VCs definition of academic freedom, the question we are required to ask as critical researchers is: does "academic freedom" apply solely to the university itself in isolation from the world, or does it apply equally to all students, staff, and educational institutions? If it does apply to the latter—as we, alongside all humanitarian organizations for the preservation of access to education, believe it should—then Swedish universities are failing to safeguard academic freedom by way of their very appeal to safeguarding academic freedom, which they understand as applying solely to the isolated institution itself, without regard for the demands of its own students and staff, or the survival of students and academics elsewhere.

Furthermore, the universities frequently cite their lack of autonomy from state directives as a reason for their inaction. Universities assert that as public institutions, they must remain neutral in foreign policy matters. For example, in response to student protests, the Gothenburg VC stated publicly, "the university follows the foreign policy positions established by the Swedish government" (Nenasheva 2024). Interestingly, in meetings with the negotiating team of the Gothenburg University protest camp, and when pushed on the matter of whether Mats Persson had instructed VCs to maintain a policy of inaction, the VC answered that this was "kind of" the case. Generally, VCs argue that any decisions regarding international collaborations or political stances should be guided by national government policies rather than independent institutional action. This deflection effectively distances the universities from the moral urgency of the situation, allowing them to position themselves as passive recipients of external constraints rather than as institutions capable of making ethical decisions in response to global events.

In a statement on 16 May 2024, Umeå University similarly argued that, as a "public authority", the university "is not supposed to pursue political issues". The question that logically follows this assertion is whether acting against genocide and scholasticide is *political* per se, or whether it falls under the university's own self-proclaimed intention to "safeguard academic freedom". Academic freedom, by its very nature, cannot be safeguarded individually, in isolation from the world. *One* single university's research is not "free" if it is surrounded by the military imposition of unfreedom, including the total destruction of educational infrastructure in Gaza.

Importantly, VCs highlight that their decision to suspend collaborations with Russian institutions was made following clear directives from the Swedish government, in contrast to the lack of similar directives regarding Israel. This comparison is used to reinforce the argument that universities are bound by government policies and should not unilaterally make decisions that could be seen as engaging in foreign policy. In some cases however, VCs claim that their commitment to academic freedom would have prevented them from severing ties with Russian institutions, had it not been for the government's directive. This assertion is curious, as such directives could be seen as encroachments on institutional autonomy and may violate Swedish administrative law, including the constitutional

prohibition against ministerial rule. In essence, if VCs would not have cut ties with Russian higher education institutions without government intervention, it suggests that the institutional autonomy of Swedish universities is indeed compromised.

By framing the genocide as a complicated situation and a mere conflict, without clearly identifying an aggressor, or as a war "between Israel and Hamas", VCs create the appearance of neutrality and political detachment. This contrasts sharply with their explicit identification of Russia as the aggressor in the Ukraine conflict, revealing a selective approach to ethical responsibility. Furthermore, while Russia is framed as totalitarian, Israel is described as a democracy. By deferring to the government to identify the responsible actor in the genocide, the VCs effectively abdicate their own ethical accountability, relying on a narrative that sidesteps the political realities of the longstanding illegal occupation and settlement of sovereign Palestinian lands. This framing, in line with that of the Swedish government, not only deflects responsibility but also aligns with a pro-Israeli stance, as it overlooks the prevalence of political repression and apartheid, which constitute grave threats to democracy. The VCs' framing of the genocide maintains an appearance of apolitical objectivity while supporting a specific political position.

Through describing the genocide in a particular way, VCs are already making a statement which aligns them with the Swedish government. Their position stands in sharp contrast to the views expressed by international expert bodies, such as human rights organizations, the UN, and international courts. The conformism and uniformity in the VCs' statements, both among themselves and in alignment with the Swedish government, is deeply troubling and cause for urgent concern.

Another recurring theme in these responses is the emphasis on student and staff safety and the need to maintain a secure environment for all. Universities argue that taking a political stance or allowing demonstrations could jeopardize this safety by fostering an atmosphere of tension or hostility at the university. This concern for security is presented as a justification for the institutions' refusal to engage in actions that could be perceived as taking a side in the genocide. Of course, this argument is not neutral; it aligns with rhetoric commonly found in discourses supporting Israel, i.e., that support of Israeli as "the only democracy in the Middle East" is neutral, while support for Palestine, or a refusal of the destruction of Palestine and Palestinians, is equivalent to terrorism. The argument deflects responsibility for the ongoing destruction of all conditions for life in Gaza, as well as the safety of Palestinian staff and students in Palestine and worldwide.

Another trend has been that VCs are careless in handling factual relations in such a way that confuses negotiations between staff, students and the university, and public debate. The VC of Karlstad University, Jerker Moodysson, for example, argued in his university post on 17 May 2024 that since the pro-Palestine protestors have no demands, he has nothing to respond to, despite a clear list of demands having been sent to him and those demands printed on sheets at the campus protest. The VC of

Gothenburg appeared in the news of Swedish national television, shortly after students set up a protest camp outside the university premises, telling the public that to her knowledge, no formal ties between Gothenburg University and Israeli higher education institutions existed. This was in spite of the fact that several weeks earlier, a list of such agreements had been sent by the WASSAP Gothenburg group to the VC and all members of the university board. In these cases, VCs took clear advantage of their positions of authority in order to obscure factual relationships and delegitimize the efforts of students and staff.

A refusal to engage with what VCs call “pressures from the outside” is also a trend in the responses. In the university post on 17 May 2024, Moodysson continued by saying that, even when and if demands were made, he would not respond to them, since the university “must not be influenced by pressure from the outside”. This disregards the obvious fact that these demands did not come *from the outside*, but rather from the university’s own students and staff. Moreover, the proposition for an insular and esoteric university, without concern for an outside world, is a profoundly disturbing remark that negates the very foundations of socially-engaged research.

Following these statements that refuse to engage with internal protest, Umeå University and later Uppsala and Lund universities, too—called on the police to remove protestors, arguing that they did not have the required permit to protest. Given the university’s own refusal of “pressure from the outside”, this appeal to the police—an external institution—to remove and silence the university’s own students and staff seems contradictory.

The universities often use broad, non-specific language when discussing their commitments to human rights or academic freedom. This vagueness helps them avoid committing to concrete actions or positions that might be politically contentious. When confronted with their own ethical guidelines, universities deflect responsibility by saying that sustainable development and ethical considerations must be weighed against the importance of academic freedom. As previously stated, academic freedom is framed by VCs as being jeopardized by taking political stances, implying that a neutral stance is necessary to protect this freedom. This is a powerful rhetorical strategy that positions any deviation from supposed neutrality as a threat to core academic values. However, there is an inherent contradiction in claiming to uphold academic freedom while also asserting that the university cannot take a stance due to governmental policies. Furthermore, the universities’ stance ignores the broader implications of academic freedom, which includes the responsibility to oppose state policies that violate human rights. By failing to take a stand, they may be undermining the very principles they claim to protect.

One final trend we wish to criticize is universities’ empty promises. In its public response to WASSAP, Malmö University proclaimed that it “endeavours to develop collaborations with universities that promote democratic values and to support other universities in their efforts to safeguard democracy and academic freedom.” Israeli institutions’ failure to meet any of these demands has been amply documented in the

critical literature, as we referred to in the previous section, so presently the question of most concern to us in response to Malmö University's statement is: what does *endeavouring* entail? Does *endeavouring* in the above statement mean *trying without success*, or does it denote a *dedication to succeeding*? Does it mean that the university generally desires its inter-institutional collaborations to be ethical according to democratic norms, or does it mean that it will actively maintain ethical collaborations and actively cut those collaborations that fail to meet its standards? If the university does indeed mean the active production of democratic ethics in collaborations, then there can be no excuse for maintaining ties with Israeli institutions that actively contribute to scholasticide and genocide.

4.5. The Role of the Minister of Education

Mats Persson, the Swedish Minister of Education, has been deeply involved in guiding university responses to the ongoing genocide, particularly in shaping their public positions. Despite his assertion on 1 March 2024 that "state universities and colleges have a high degree of self-determination over their activities," Persson argued in an article in *Aftonbladet*, published 29 May 2024, that universities lack the autonomy to act independently on issues related to foreign policy (Persson 2024). "The protests directed at the universities will also not lead to the breaking of any agreements," he writes. "It is the government that governs and shapes foreign policy—not Sweden's Vice Chancellors" (our translation). This assertion makes it clear that, despite the protests and demands from within the academic community, the government will not allow universities to sever ties with Israeli institutions or take a stand against genocide and scholasticide.

In another article, dated 3 May 2024, Persson states that, "In close connection to the terrorist organization Hamas's attack on Israel on 7 October, I took the initiative to meet with the vice-chancellors—to get an understanding and to urge that universities in Sweden do not conduct their own foreign policy" (our translation; TT 2024).

Moreover, on 16 November 2023, Persson held a digital meeting with university VCs to discuss the spread of antisemitism across campuses and what he refers to as "the conflict between Israel and Hamas". This last-minute meeting occurred just days before the SUHF assembly on 23 November, where it was decided that universities should not take action regarding the genocide in Gaza. This timing suggests Persson's influence in shaping the non-interventionist stance that SUHF ultimately adopted. However, no minutes are available from the 16 November meeting, and the minutes from the SUHF meeting on 23 November provide no explanation of the discussions that led to the decision of inaction.

4.6. Autonomy at Risk: A Case of Ministerial Rule?

As stated in section 4.2., the Higher Education Act (1992:1434) grants universities significant autonomy, allowing them to operate independently within the framework of laws and regulations set by the parliament and government. The Minister of Education can provide overarching policy guidance and influence through budgetary measures, but cannot issue directives on specific matters, such as political stances or individual university decisions on matters of responsible internationalization. Such actions would constitute an intrusion into the independence of universities and violate the principle of the prohibition of ministerial rule. It can however be difficult to assess whether statements or actions from a particular minister have had such undue influence on the decision making processes of authorities, as to constitute ministerial rule. It can also be challenging to determine whether the activities of the authority being critiqued are protected under the prohibition against ministerial rule. To understand these questions better, it is helpful to look at the *praxis* of the Constitutional Committee, i.e. the previous and similar cases.

For example, Minister of Education Ibrahim Baylan was criticised by the Constitutional Committee (KU) for ministerial rule in 2005 after questioning a report produced by the Swedish National Agency for Education on television, which was subsequently withdrawn. In that case, the critique from the minister concerned activities other than official decisions with direct impact on individuals. The production of reports is seemingly a more explicit part of the agency's administrative duties than political or ethical positions are for universities. However, it can certainly be argued that decisions on matters of responsible internationalisation and formal research ties on an institutional level, follows from the assignment description in the Higher Education Act, Chapter 1, Section 5, Paragraph 3, regarded above. In this light, Persson's statements, documented above, could be seen as a form of ministerial rule: he surpasses the limitations of his position by publicly asserting authority over the decision-making processes of universities.

4.7. Concluding Remarks

In communications from VCs, the discussion is often misframed: they understand students and staff as compelling them to express ideological positions on foreign issues. However, the demands are that universities actively support the production of knowledge that does not contribute to apartheid, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. The real concern is to protect researchers from becoming entangled in foreign conflicts and producing knowledge that may be used for harmful purposes, particularly in collaboration with universities complicit in Israeli warfare, which poses a significant ethical risk.

In short, the communications of VCs do not adequately legitimize their stance of inaction in the midst of an ongoing genocide. Given the striking similarity of all the responses we have received, what we are yet to discover is the source of universities' refusals. At the time of writing, Mats Persson - the minister of education - is under review by the Constitutional Committee for allegedly attempting to influence university activities. Our findings suggest that Mats Persson's statements and actions may constitute ministerial rule, which is prohibited under Swedish constitutional law. However this might be, and contrary to the claims of VCs, there is no legal basis for universities' claims that they are mere representatives of the government's position.

Given the urgent need for the promotion of academic freedom and the offer of support to displaced and dispossessed academics in Palestine, especially in Gaza, we urge universities to clarify the source of their dismissals of our demands for a boycott of Israeli universities, and to explain exactly how they can account for these glaring contradictions between the abstract promotion of principles of academic freedom and the refusal to engage in the most pressing global need for academic freedom today.

Conclusion:

The Need for Swedish Universities to Stand for Academic Freedom

This report attempts to provide Swedish universities with the legal, ethical, and critical groundwork required for them to (1) cut all formal collaborations with Israeli universities and other complicit institutions, and (2) establish collaborations with Palestinian universities.

As we have shown, there is no legal basis for universities' consistent claims that they have insufficient autonomy to determine their own international collaborations. Universities would satisfy their own ethical duties by ceasing to maintain connections with Israeli institutions that we have shown to actively participate in the illegal occupation of Palestine.

As students and staff at Swedish universities—internal to the institutions we criticize here—our own research is put at risk by the ongoing collaborations with complicit institutions. We rely on our universities to make institutional decisions that consider the global impact of research and that actively seek to make academic freedom a global possibility. Currently, our universities are failing us, putting Swedish students and academics at risk of complicity in war crimes and crimes against humanity, and ignoring the vast suffering of students and academics in Palestine.

Our demand is for Swedish universities to practise their critical autonomy and to engage ethically with the world by establishing collaborations with Palestinian universities and cutting ties with Israeli universities. The IDF is committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza, slaughtering students, academics, and the general public, while entirely eradicating the educational infrastructure of the region. No academic freedom is possible while these conditions remain.

Israeli universities and the Israeli government are reliant on global support for their colonial and genocidal project of occupation and apartheid. As has been historically proven time and time again, the international refusal to accept these conditions as normal has a significant impact on those institutions that actively produce and encourage violent divisions in society.

No university can exist in isolation. It is situated in a network of relations and collaborations, and, in order to maintain an ethical practice in the world, it must carefully decide who it validates through the generative network of global research. Israeli university training programs for apartheid and genocide are validated and normalized by international approval and unquestioned collaborations. Swedish universities have the opportunity to take a meaningful stand against the overwhelming destruction and violence that Israeli universities are contributing to.

So far, Swedish universities have failed at this task, instead condemning their students and staff, avoiding scrutiny, resorting to simplistic dismissals of legitimate protest, and deferring all critical responsibility to the government. It is not too late to remedy this failure by practising the intellectual autonomy and ethical conduct that universities claim to be constituted and guided by.

We demand that Swedish universities assert their autonomy by:

- 1. ending all formal collaborations with Israeli universities and other complicit institutions, in accordance with the PACBI guidelines;**
- 2. establishing collaborations with Palestinian universities, including providing meaningful support to displaced Palestinian academics and students, offering them a place to study and work at Swedish universities.**

WASSAP,
Sweden,
August 2024.

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Appendix

See the following documents for full reports and data regarding our communications with universities and the Ministry of Education.

Data: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1B70hKXltLvhNoMQ-X4Mx1PF3QcmG1lu0/edit#heading=h.9lyjuhcnore>

