



Jerusalem, 11 October 2023

Dear President Gay, and Deans at Harvard University,

We are the President, and the current and the previous Rectors (provosts) of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel. We write following your October 9, 2023 Statement, titled “War in the Middle East”. Harvard University is the world’s lighthouse of academic research and teaching. Unfortunately, your Statement does not meet the most minimal standards of moral leadership, courage, and commitment to truth.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas, the terror organization which is the *de-facto* ruler of the Gaza Strip, has sent more than one thousand militants to commit *genocide* against the Jewish Israeli population. To our horror, Hamas was extremely successful in pursuing its evil cause. At least 1,000 Israeli civilians and foreigners were murdered, and thousands more were seriously wounded (among them women and young girls who were brutally raped), while hundreds were taken hostages (among them toddlers and elderly women over 80 years old). Please find below a more detailed, documented description of the cruelties committed by Hamas militants against Israeli civilians. These activities are parallel, and to some extent even exceed, those committed by ISIS in previous years.

The Hamas leaders’ explicit statements, as well as their actions, provide a clear indication that the mass killing was committed with the intent to destroy the Jews in Israel. One does not have to be an international law expert to realize the extreme immorality of this crime of genocide. All that is needed is basic common sense and minimum integrity.

The Statement of the leadership of Harvard University fails to reflect any of this. It is explicit in giving priority to one value, namely that of maintaining “one Harvard community,” over the commitment to unequivocally condemn evil. You conclude your Statement noting that “[a]t this moment of challenge, let us embody the care and compassion the world needs now.” With all due respect, the world needs more than that from the lighthouse of wisdom. It needs you to show some moral courage, even if some members of “one Harvard community” hold immoral positions.



The state of Israel is responding to the attacks, by launching a military campaign which is aimed at removing the Hamas from power, as a preventive measure. As in any military operation, be it as just as it may, the preventive measures are subject to the requirement of avoiding unnecessary harm to civilians who do not impose a threat. One may remind Israel of its duties, and may criticize it, if one finds that Israel has violated its commitments. These are issues that will have to be addressed when the relevant information is available. This factual uncertainty cannot serve as a justification for taking a morally relativist approach regarding the massacre committed by Hamas.

The Harvard University's administration has failed us. It failed us not only as Israelis, who are subject to the imminent threat of being subject to genocide, but also as leaders of an academic institution, who expect their colleagues to present higher moral standards, and more courage.

Prof. Asher Cohen, President, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Prof. Tamir Sheafer, Rector, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Prof. Barak Medina, Previous Rector, Hebrew University of Jerusalem