

Report

The Max Planck Society and the Israeli Military-Academic Complex:

A Chronicle of Collaboration, Legitimization and Complicity



Introduction

This report examines the collaborations between the Max Planck Society (MPS), one of Germany's most prominent research institutions and a central actor in Israeli-German scientific cooperation, and Israeli state, academic, and defense-linked entities. It assesses these collaborations in light of ongoing and well-documented violations of international law and human rights by Israel, and evaluates the extent to which such partnerships risk contributing to, enabling, and normalizing these violations.

The report is produced in the context of an escalating crisis for Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. As of June 2026, the full scale of civilian deaths in Gaza remains unknown and continues to rise¹. This is occurring despite a ceasefire agreement reached in October 2025, which has been repeatedly violated^{2,3}. Concurrently, violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories has intensified^{4,5,6}, alongside policies facilitating the expansion and consolidation of Israeli control over occupied land. In July 2025, the Knesset adopted a motion declaring the West Bank an inseparable part of Israel⁷. In February 2026, the Israeli government approved measures enabling the registration of land in the West Bank as state property widely characterized as constituting *de facto* annexation⁸. In September 2025, a United Nations commission concluded that Israel's conduct in Gaza corresponds to acts of genocide⁹.

Within this context, the role of third states, private actors, and research institutions is not neutral. UN Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territory Francesca Albanese's report on the "economy of genocide"¹⁰ demonstrates how international partnerships, including those involving European academic institutions, may play a material role in sustaining, facilitating, or legitimizing systems of occupation, apartheid, and large-scale violence against civilian populations.

This question of institutional responsibility is not new to the MPS. Founded in 1948 as the successor to the Kaiser Wilhelm Society, parts of which were entangled in the crimes of the Nazi regime including human experimentation associated with figures such as Josef Mengele, the Society's contemporary ethical framework¹¹ explicitly commits it to upholding international law and preventing harm. These

¹ The estimation as of February 2026 was over 70.000 people killed. See: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-4-february-2026>). Other estimates indicate over 100.000 deaths (see Paragraph 2.1).

² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/11/un-experts-urge-states-act-israeli-violations-threaten-fragile-gaza>

³ <https://press.un.org/en/2026/sc16284.doc.htm>

⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2025/11/occupied-west-bank-increased-israeli-violence-against-palestinians>

⁵ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-346-west-bank>

⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2026/03/israels-settlement-expansion-drives-mass-displacement-west-bank-un-report>

⁷ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/knesset-votes-71-13-for-non-binding-motion-calling-to-annex-west-bank/>

⁸ In February 2026, the Israel government approved measures to allow the registration of lands in the West Bank as state property, which has been denoted as a "de-facto annexation". See e.g.: (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2026/02/special-rapporteur-condemns-israeli-attempts-further-annex-west-bank>).

⁹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/09/israel-has-committed-genocide-gaza-strip-un-commission-finds>

¹⁰ <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/a-hrc-59-23-from-economy-of-occupation-to-economy-of-genocide-report-special-rapporteur-francesca-albanese-palestine-2025/>

¹¹ <https://www.mpg.de/197392/guidelines-and-rules-of-the-max-planck-society-on-a-responsible-approach-to-freedom-of-research-and-research-risks.pdf>

commitments emerged as a necessary response to this history. Yet, this creates a fundamental paradox: the very historical experience that led the MPS to institutionalize principles of responsibility and “do no harm” now stands in tension with patterns of collaboration that risk aiding and abetting ongoing grave violations of international law. Rather than a distant past, this history establishes the standard against which current practices and collaborations must be assessed.

This report focuses specifically on the role of the MPS within this broader landscape. It examines collaborations that intersect with the Israeli military-industrial complex, activities conducted in occupied and annexed territory, and forms of engagement that may contribute to or further normalize and legitimize directly and indirectly the oppression of Palestinians. The analysis encompasses not only formal institutional partnerships, but also material support for research outputs, conferences, funding structures, and public interventions by affiliated actors.

The findings indicate a significant gap between the MPS’s stated ethical commitments and its institutional practices. The Society’s own guidelines on a “Responsible Approach to Freedom of Research and Research Risks”¹² explicitly require adherence to international law, including human rights and international humanitarian law, and emphasize the obligation to prevent harm and anticipate the misuse of research. These responsibilities apply both institutionally and individually to researchers. However, as this report demonstrates, collaborations with Israeli institutions deeply embedded in systems of occupation and military control have not only persisted during a period of escalating violations, but in some instances expanded through substantial financial support by MPS.

The report is structured around a set of documented cases, with particular focus on the MPS’s Minerva Centers. These cases illustrate patterns of collaboration that extend from research with direct or foreseeable military applications, to the organization of events involving representatives of the Israeli military, to institutional engagement in occupied territory. The key findings can be summarized as follows:

First, Chapter 1 maps the institutional infrastructure through which the Max Planck Society (MPS) collaborates with Israeli academia, primarily through the Minerva Foundation and its network of Minerva Centers hosted at Israeli universities. The chapter situates these collaborations within the broader structural role played by Israeli academic institutions in Israel’s military-industrial complex, systems of occupation and apartheid, and the ongoing colonization of Palestinian land. It further outlines the range of institutional partnerships connecting the MPS to Israeli universities and research initiatives.

Second, Chapter 2 contextualizes these collaborations within the period of the ongoing genocide in Gaza between 2023 and 2025. It traces a chronology of continued (and in some respects intensified) collaboration between the MPS and Israeli institutions during this period, including new funding streams, institutional visits, public ceremonies, and the establishment of new initiatives and research centers. The chapter also examines discourses repeatedly promoted by figures

¹²<https://www.mpg.de/197392/guidelines-and-rules-of-the-max-planck-society-on-a-responsible-approach-to-freedom-of-research-and-research-risks.pdf>.

affiliated with Minerva Centers and the MPS that question protections afforded to civilians under international law, or contribute to narratives legitimizing the oppression of Palestinians. These statements, made by Israeli academics as part of MPS events, without any clarification or correction according to the norms of international law by MPS, create the impression of MPS endorsement of violations of international law. In addition, it documents direct and indirect forms of engagement between Minerva-affiliated institutions and Israel's military establishment.

Third, Chapter 3 examines military-academic entanglements within Max Planck's Minerva Centers hosted at the Technion. It documents research conducted by directors and members of these centers with direct or foreseeable military applications, including facial recognition technologies, drones, propulsion systems, and aerospace engineering. In one documented case, research linked to a Minerva Center contributed to patented technologies later sold to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and used for the surveillance of Palestinians. The chapter further demonstrates sustained and institutionalized collaboration between Minerva-affiliated researchers and Israel's defense sector, including MAFAT¹³, Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd. (RAFAEL), Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), and Elbit Systems Ltd. (ELBIT) – through jointly organized conferences, workshops, military-linked funding schemes, shared laboratories, and co-authored research projects.

Fourth, Chapter 4 examines collaborations linked to occupied and annexed Palestinian and Syrian territories. It documents workshops organized in the annexed Syrian Golan Heights, conferences connected to archeological excavations in occupied territories, and connections with Ariel University, an institution operating illegally in the occupied West Bank¹⁴. The chapter also highlights concerns regarding Minerva Centers hosted at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem on Mount Scopus, partly located in occupied and annexed East Jerusalem. Together, these activities raise serious concerns regarding compliance with international legal obligations, including the duty of non-recognition and non-assistance in situations of unlawful occupation and annexation.

Taken together, the evidence presented throughout this report raises fundamental ethical, political, and legal questions regarding the role of scientific institutions in contexts of systemic violence. Far from constituting politically neutral scientific exchange, the collaborations documented here illustrate how academic partnerships may contribute to the normalization, legitimization, and material support of institutions implicated in occupation, apartheid, and genocide.

¹³ Directorate of Defense, Research and Development, a joint administrative body of the Israel Ministry of Defense and the Israel Defense Forces (<https://ddrd-mafat.mod.gov.il/en/about>).

¹⁴ Ariel University is located in the Israeli settlement of Ariel in the occupied West Bank. The ICJ, the UN Security Council, and most of the international community consider it illegal under international law (<http://israeli-academics-for-peace.org.il/en/the-truth-about-the-ariel-university/>).

Methodology

The report relies exclusively on publicly available sources such as official websites, online archives, press releases, and other verifiable digital content. It employs a rigorous, evidence-based approach to ensure analytical precision, objectivity and transparency. All data sources were archived (on <https://archive.org/>), ensuring the reproducibility of the findings.

Recurrent Acronyms

MPS = Max Planck Society.

IDF = Israel Defence Forces.

MAFAT = Directorate of Defense, Research and Development, a joint administrative body of the Israel Ministry of Defense and the Israel Defense Forces.

IAI = Israel Aerospace Industries, one of Israel's largest weapon manufacturers.

RAFAEL = Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd., one of Israel's largest weapon manufacturers.

ELBIT = Elbit Systems Ltd., one of Israel's largest weapon manufacturers.

MTPES = Minerva Center for Micro Turbine Powered Energy Systems.

RIAB = Minerva Center for the Relations between Israel and Aram in Biblical Times.

ICJ = International Court of Justice.

Note to the reader

Maya Wind's book "Towers of Ivory and Steel: How Israeli Universities Deny Palestinian Freedom." (Verso Books, 2024)^{15,16} is often cited in this report in superscript as: (Maya Wind, 2024).

¹⁵ <https://www.mayaywind.com/book>

¹⁶ <https://www.versobooks.com/products/3009-towers-of-ivory-and-steel>

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Chapter 1

The Max Planck Society and Israeli Academia



The President of the Max Planck Society, on his way to the Weizmann Institute in Rehovot in 1959. Source: Max Planck Society

1.1) The Max Planck Society

The Max Planck Society is one of Germany's most renowned research institutions, with 85 institutes and research centers in Germany and around the world and with an annual budget of 2.15 billion euros in 2024¹⁷.

The Minerva Foundation and the Minerva Centers

The MPS primarily collaborates with Israel through its Minerva Foundation (Minerva Stiftung in German)^{18,19}. The Minerva Foundation is a non-profit organisation (gGmbH), subsidiary of the MPS, founded in 1962 (as Minerva Limited – Minerva Gesellschaft für die Forschung mbH²⁰). Since 1964, it has been used by the German Federal Government, from 1973 through the German Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMBF)²¹, to finance Israeli institutions with the aim of promoting scientific collaborations between Germany and Israel. The BMBF has provided the Minerva Foundation with more than 350 million euros since 1964²².

Key projects funded through the Minerva foundation are the Minerva Centers²³. Minerva Centers, started in the 1980s, are research institutions located in Israeli host universities and at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel. They are co-funded by the Minerva Foundation and by the host institute and carry out research in cooperation with German partners (usually Max Planck Institutes in Germany). Each Minerva Center has a budget of circa €150.000/year²⁴. In 2025 there were 24 active Minerva Centers, and a 2025/2026 call was opened in September 2025 for the creation of up to two new Minerva Centers in 2026²⁵.

In this report we examine the collaborations with the following Israeli universities and Minerva Centers:

- The **Technion** – Israel Institute of Technology – is integral to Israel's military-industrial complex²⁶. The Minerva Center for Micro Turbine Powered Energy Systems^{27,28} (MTPES) was established in 2014 at Technion's Aerospace Department and is directed by Prof. Beni Cukurel. The Franz Ollendorff Minerva Center for Information and Automation^{29,30} was founded in the Department of Electrical Engineering of Technion. It was active from 1985 until 2023, and it was directed by Prof. Yehoshua Zeevi³¹.
- The **Bar-Ilan University**, founded in 1955 in Tel-Aviv, has a record of archeological excavations in occupied territories³² and strong ties with the military apparatus in Israel³³. The Minerva Center for the Relations between

¹⁷ <https://www.mpg.de/facts-and-figures>

¹⁸ <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/>

¹⁹ https://pure.mpg.de/rest/items/item_2426617_19/component/file_2465371/content; DOI: 10.17617/2.2426617

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/about-us>

²² <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/about-us/minerva-stiftung/history>

²³ <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/minerva-centers>

²⁴ <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/14407/rates-and-conditions>

²⁵ <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/85079/call-for-proposals-minerva-centers-2025-26>

²⁶ <https://ats.org/our-impact/where-israels-security-innovation-begins/>

²⁷ <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/centers/list/minerva-center-for-micro-turbine-powered-energy-systems>

²⁸ <https://mtpes.net.technion.ac.il/>

²⁹ <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/centers/list/franz-ollendorff-minerva-center-for-information-and-automation>

³⁰ <https://ollendorff.technion.ac.il/>

³¹ <https://webee.technion.ac.il/people/zeevi/>

³² <https://www.eur.nl/media/2025-05-20250526-advice-collaborations-israeli-universities-publication>

³³ <https://bdsmovement.net/news/israeli-universities-attacking-campus-uprisings-uphold-israels-crimes-against-palestinians>

Israel and Aram in Biblical Times^{34,35} (RIAB) was established in 2015 at Bar-Illan university. The scope of the center is, according to its website, “the study of the interconnections and mutual influences between Aram and Israel in ancient (biblical) times”³⁶. Questions arise about the name and scope of the center as Israel was founded in 1948.

- The **University of Haifa**, founded in 1963 as a branch of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The University has strong ties with Israel’s military-industrial complex^{37,38,39}. The Minerva Center for the Rule of Law under Extreme Conditions^{40,41} at Haifa University was established in 2014. The center focuses on policies and regulations under natural disasters, national security challenges (wars, terrorism, anti-terrorism,...), and socioeconomic crises⁴².
- The **Hebrew University of Jerusalem**, founded in 1918, has links with Israel’s military and played a fundamental role in the occupation and oppression of the Palestinian territories around Jerusalem^(Maya Wind, 2024). The Minerva Center for Human Rights^{43,44}, active since 1995 within the university’s faculty of law, is directed by Prof. Barak Medina. Prof. Dr. Iur. Anne Peters, director of the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, Heidelberg, serves as its Chair. The Fritz Haber Minerva Center for Molecular Dynamics^{45,46} operated in the period 1981-2023 at the Institute of Chemistry of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- **Ariel University**⁴⁷, located in the urban settlement of Ariel, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, is an illegal institution according to Article 49(6) of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949)⁴⁸, the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion (2004)⁴⁹, and the UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016)⁵⁰. The University is directly involved in the annexation of occupied territories for the expansion of its campus^{51,52}.

Other collaborations with Israeli institutions

Other than the Minerva Centers, other types of collaborations exist between the MPS and Israeli institutions⁵³. For example:

- The **Max Planck-Israel programme**⁵⁴, started in December 2023 with one million euros made available from the Max Planck Society. Initially set to run

³⁴ <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/centers/list/minerva-center-for-the-relations-between-israel-and-aram-in-biblical-times>

³⁵ <https://www.aramisrael.org>

³⁶ <https://www.aramisrael.org/about>

³⁷ <https://www.eur.nl/media/2025-05-20250526-advice-collaborations-israeli-universities-publication>

³⁸ <https://magazine.haifa.ac.il/index.php/winter-2018/113-university-of-haifa-to-lead-israel4>

³⁹ <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/military-colleges/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/centers/list/minerva-center-for-the-rule-of-law-and-extreme-condition>

⁴¹ <https://minervaxtremelaw.haifa.ac.il/>

⁴² <https://minervaxtremelaw.haifa.ac.il/about-the-center/>

⁴³ <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/centers/list/minerva-center-for-human-rights>

⁴⁴ <https://en.minervacenter.huji.ac.il/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/centers/list/fritz-haber-minerva-center-for-molecular-dynamics>

⁴⁶ <https://fhrc.huji.ac.il/>

⁴⁷ <https://campuscore.ariel.ac.il/wp/en/>

⁴⁸ <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/article-49>

⁴⁹ <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/131/131-20040709-ADV-01-00-EN.pdf>

⁵⁰ <https://www.un.org/webcast/pdfs/SRES2334-2016.pdf>

⁵¹ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/adelson-to-donate-20-million-to-expand-west-bank-university/>

⁵² <https://campuscore.ariel.ac.il/wp/university-friends/wp-content/uploads/sites/27/2018/11/Ariel-University-Projects-English-vers-ion-147.pdf>

⁵³ <https://www.mpg.de/israel>

⁵⁴ <https://www.mpg.de/max-planck-israel-programme>

until 2025 the program has been extended until the end of December 2026⁵⁵.

- The **Minerva Weizmann Programme**, that supports individual and group research projects at the Weizmann Institute of Science with a yearly budget of circa 3.6 million euros⁵⁶.
- The **Max Planck-Weizmann Postdoctoral Programme**, which offers four-year appointments for postdoctoral researchers to be spent both at the Weizmann Institute and at one of the MPS centers in Germany. The sixth open call for the program has its deadline on July 1st 2026⁵⁷.
- The **Max Planck Center for Democracy, Security and Human Rights**⁵⁸ opened in Jerusalem in November 2025 (Max Planck Centers are a key element of the Max Planck Society's international strategy⁵⁹).

1.2) The role of Israeli academia in the oppression of Palestinians

The MPS collaborates with Israel primarily through Israeli academia. Israeli universities are deeply entangled with the Israeli military-industrial complex and provide material support for the oppression of Palestinians. The followings are few examples⁶⁰:

- **Education of the IDF:** Israeli universities host numerous programs in collaboration with the Academic Reserve program of the IDF (Atuda)^{61,62,63} (Maya Wind, 2024). The aim of these programs is to educate the research and development branches of the IDF.
- **Israeli academia: the backbone of the military-industrial complex:** The research carried out at institutions such as Technion and at the Weizmann Institute is key to the technological development of armaments in companies like RAFAEL, ELBIT, IAI and Bet Shemesh Engines^{64,65,66,67,68}. The presence of the military-industrial complex is extensive in all Israeli universities. Research funding, seminars, workshops, research collaborations, and dedicated centers within the universities themselves⁶⁹ are a few examples of the strict interconnection between Israel's military-industrial complex and academic institutions.
- **Legal support to the military:** Universities in Israel provide legal support to the

⁵⁵ https://graduate.haifa.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Max-Planck-Israel-Programme_ext.-December-2026-1.pdf

⁵⁶ <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/weizmann>

⁵⁷ <https://www.mpg.de/20566192/max-planck-weizmann-postdoc-programme>

⁵⁸ <https://www.mpg.de/25704767/max-planck-center-for-democracy-security-and-human-rights>

⁵⁹ <https://www.mpg.de/max-planck-centers>

⁶⁰ For a more comprehensive summary, see e.g., Maya Wind, "Towers of Ivory and Steel", Verso Books, 2024.

⁶¹ <https://www.idf.il/%D7%90%D7%AA%D7%A8%D7%99-%D7%99%D7%97%D7%99%D7%93%D7%95%D7%AA/%D7%A2%D7%A%D7%95%D7%93%D7%94-%D7%90%D7%A7%D7%93%D7%9E%D7%99%D7%AA/english/>

⁶² <https://austfh.org.au/when-duty-calls-the-hebrew-university-is-always-there/>

⁶³ <https://aerospace.technion.ac.il/studies/ug-studies/excellence-programs/silon-excellence-program/>

⁶⁴ <https://ats.org/our-impact/where-israels-security-innovation-begins/>

⁶⁵ <https://research.technion.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Industry-Guide-to-the-Technion-MANLAM-2017.pdf>

⁶⁶ https://www.academicsforjustice.com/report/feb_25_2025

⁶⁷ <https://academicsforpalestine.dk/academic-boycott/complicit-israeli-universities/>

⁶⁸ <https://www.972mag.com/top-israeli-university-marketing-countys-arms-industry-to-the-world/>

⁶⁹ https://in.bgu.ac.il/en/hsi/Pages/international_collaborations.aspx

IDF. Notably, Tel Aviv University hosts the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS)⁷⁰, which merges academic experts with senior members of the army to give legal guidance to the IDF^{71,72}.

- **Apartheid and settler colonialism:** Israeli universities actively participate in the occupation and annexation of Palestinian land. For example, Ariel University is located in the illegal settlement of Ariel, in the West Bank, and directly facilitates settlement expansion⁷³. Despite its illegality under international law, the university is fully recognised by the Israeli Council for Higher Education and by the Committee of University Heads⁷⁴. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem's campus on Mount Scopus is also partially built in the occupied territories in East Jerusalem and played a role in the oppression of the surrounding Palestinian villages⁷⁵(Maya Wind, 2024). Israeli universities also play a key role in archeological activities and exploitation in occupied and annexed territory^(Maya Wind, 2024).

In light of the structural role of Israeli academia outlined above, the collaborations between the Max Planck Society and Israeli universities raise fundamental questions. By embedding funding, research cooperation, and institutional presence within Israeli universities, the Max Planck Society is not engaging in abstract or isolated scientific exchange. It is participating in, and materially supporting, an ongoing system in which academic institutions are intertwined with military development, legal justification of force, and the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territory.

Given the scale and opacity of these partnerships, a fully exhaustive mapping is beyond the scope of this report. However, the evidence presented here is sufficient to establish that these collaborations are neither marginal nor incidental, but rather systemic. The evidence thus necessitates a principled response by the MPS according to its own guidelines in respect of fundamental rights and respect for international law.

⁷⁰ <https://www.inss.org.il/>

⁷¹ <https://www.inss.org.il/mission/>

⁷² <https://www.inss.org.il/board-of-directors/>

⁷³ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/adelson-to-donate-20-million-to-expand-west-bank-university/>

⁷⁴ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/after-decade-of-refusal-ariel-university-accepted-into-key-education-organization/>

⁷⁵ <https://aurdip.org/en/the-hebrew-university-assists/>

Chapter 2

Institutional Collaborations Amid Allegations of Genocide

Isaac Herzog, accused of
“direct and public incitement
to commit genocide” in a UN
Commission of Inquiry report
(A/HRC/60/CRP.3)



Patrick Cramer,
President of Max
Planck Society

December 2024:
Patrick Cramer (left) at the opening ceremony of the Max Planck Office in Israel
together with the Israeli President Isaac Herzog (right), on record at the ICJ in
the case South Africa vs. Israel concerning the crime of genocide for quotes
such as:

““There are no innocent civilians in Gaza”

2.1) Chronology of Institutional Collaboration and Public Positioning during Genocide

Understanding the range and depth of the MPS's collaborations with Israel requires a consideration of the longstanding nature and historical context of such connections, which started with the visit of a prominent Max Planck delegation to the Weizmann Institute in Israel in 1959⁷⁶.

We outline here two years of this institutional collaboration, from October 2023 to December 2025. We walk through collaborative activities and statements chronologically, and show how the MPS sustained and even celebrated collaborations with Israel, despite ongoing violations of human rights and grave breaches of international law, including genocide, during a period in which strong evidences have been brought on the ties between Israeli academic institutions and state and military structure^(Maya Wind, 2024).

October 2023: A Hamas-led attack against Israel resulted in more than 1.200 people killed. These included 815 civilians, 38 of whom were children. During the attack, about 250 civilians and soldiers were taken hostage in Gaza⁷⁷. The Max Planck Society released an official statement in response to the attacks⁷⁸:

“The attacks by Hamas, and this also fills us with great sorrow, have also caused, and will cause, unspeakable suffering among the Palestinian civilian population. Terrorism does not offer prospects for the future — for anyone.”

Israel's bombing of Gaza started shortly after. On the 27th of October, Israel's ground offensive in Gaza began, leading to almost 10.000 deaths, including more than 4.000 children, in a few days⁷⁹. By mid-October 2023, 800 scholars of international law and genocide and Holocaust scholars issued a joint statement warning of a potential genocide⁸⁰.

November 2023: The death toll in Gaza reached around 11.000, with women and children forming the majority of this number⁸¹. Around thirty UN Special Rapporteurs and UN experts issued a statement in mid-November warning of an “unfolding genocide”⁸². The Max Planck Society's President visited the Weizmann Institute of Science to commemorate the 50th year of the Minerva Fellowship Program. During his speech, he stated the following⁸³:

“We are all horrified to see the victims of terror in Israel and to see the victims of the war in Gaza. We hope for an immediate return of all hostages. We hope that the guns will soon be silenced. We hope for swift delivery of humanitarian aid to all civilians in Gaza.”

December 2023: The death toll in Gaza rose to around 20.000, mostly women and

⁷⁶ <https://doi.org/10.17617/2.2426617>

⁷⁷ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/17/october-7-crimes-against-humanity-war-crimes-hamas-led-groups>

⁷⁸ <https://www.mpg.de/20953820/statement-on-the-terror-attacks-against-israel>

⁷⁹ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/11/1143107>

⁸⁰ <https://twailr.com/public-statement-scholars-warn-of-potential-genocide-in-gaza/>

⁸¹ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-40>

⁸² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/11/gaza-un-experts-call-international-community-prevent-genocide-against>

⁸³ <https://www.mpg.de/21174473/20231128-speech-in-jerusalem.pdf>

children⁸⁴. The Max Planck Society allocated one million euros to a new program called “The Max Planck Israel Programme”, set to run in 2024-2025⁸⁵ and extended until the end of December 2026⁸⁶. The program aimed to provide financial support for German-Israeli cooperation. On Dec 29, South Africa submitted its case against Israel under the UN Genocide Convention⁸⁷, leading to the first of three provisional measures against Israel for failure to meet the obligation of preventing genocide⁸⁸.

February 2024: The death toll in Gaza rose to 30.000 – mostly women and children. Around 1.700.000 people (75% of Gaza’s population) were displaced⁸⁹. On February 3rd, an article in the German newspaper *Die Welt am Sonntag* accused Prof. Ghassan Hage, of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle, of “hatred of Israel” for posts criticising Israel on his personal blog⁹⁰. Shortly after, on February 7th, Prof. Hage was dismissed by the Max Planck Society. From the MPS’s official statement⁹¹:

"The freedoms enshrined in the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany for 75 years are invaluable to the Max Planck Society. However, these freedoms come with great responsibility. Researchers abuse their civil liberties when they undermine the credibility of science with publicly disseminated statements, thereby damaging the reputation and trust in the institutions that uphold it. The fundamental right to freedom of opinion is constrained by the mutual duties of consideration and loyalty in the employment relationship.

Racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, discrimination, hatred, and agitation have no place in the Max Planck Society."

Prof. Hage’s statement was published shortly after⁹². Numerous letters were written to the Max Planck Society criticizing Prof. Hage dismissal^{93,94,95,96} and against the continuation of the collaborations with Israel⁹⁷. One letter, written by MPS’s researchers⁹⁸, was signed by more than 150 MPS’s employees from Institutes all over Germany. A reply to the letter was never received⁹⁹.

November 2024: The International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants against Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu¹⁰⁰ and Israeli defense minister Yoav Gallant¹⁰¹. They are charged with war crimes of starvation as a method of warfare and of intentionally directing an attack against the civilian population; and the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution, and other inhumane acts

⁸⁴ https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/Gaza_casualties_info-graphic_14_Dec_2023%20final.pdf

⁸⁵ <https://www.mpg.de/max-planck-israel-programme>

⁸⁶ https://graduate.haifa.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Max-Planck-Israel-Programme_ext.-December-2026-1.pdf

⁸⁷ <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20231229-pre-01-00-en.pdf>

⁸⁸ <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/192>

⁸⁹ https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Gaza_casualties_info-graphic_19_Feb_2024.pdf

⁹⁰ <https://hageba2a.blogspot.com/2023/10/israel-palestine-endless-dead-end-that.html>

⁹¹ <https://www.mpg.de/21510445/statement-ghassan-hage>

⁹² <https://johnmenadue.com/post/2024/02/germany-and-critique-of-israel-my-sacking-from-the-max-planck-institute-for-social-anthropology/>

⁹³ <https://easaonline.org/letters-of-support/easa-letter-regarding-academic-freedom-and-prof-ghassan-hage/>

⁹⁴ <https://www.brismes.ac.uk/news/letter-max-planck-society-professor-ghassan-hage>

⁹⁵ <https://aurdip.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Letter-in-support-of-Prof.-Ghassan-Hage-Prof.-Dr.-Patrick-Cramer.pdf>

⁹⁶ <https://www.casaonline.cz/a-letter-to-the-max-planck-society-regarding-prof-ghassan-hage/>

⁹⁷ <https://freedomnews.org.uk/2023/12/17/dispute-within-max-planck-society-over-ties-to-israel/>

⁹⁸ <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdm4mlxjGaNJYWMjDIZvNCTqTHgCu4TG13LipC9ppNN0oSmsA/viewform>

⁹⁹ Private communication.

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.icc-cpi.int/defendant/netanyahu>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.icc-cpi.int/defendant/gallant>

from at least 8 October 2023. The death toll in Gaza rose to 44.000 – mostly women and children. Over 1.900.000 people (90% of Gaza's population) were officially displaced. Gaza's educational system collapsed, and more than 11.400 students and educational staff members were killed¹⁰². Israel's government continued its campaign of dehumanisation of Palestinians; in June it posted, on its official X account, a video with a quote stating "there are no innocent civilians (in Gaza)."¹⁰³ A Special Committee of the UN found that Israel's actions in Gaza were consistent with genocide¹⁰⁴. Simultaneously, the Max Planck Society opened a new office at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute¹⁰⁵; the MPS President gave a speech at the opening ceremony, attended also by Israel's President Isaac Herzog (see Figure 1). Here is an extract from the MPS's President's speech¹⁰⁶:

"One thing has to worry us as a research organization: The war also endangers education and science, which are so important for the future.(...) Science is essential, in particular for states like Israel or Germany(...). But Israeli science is under threat. Students and researchers have to leave campus and go to war(...). And even worse: Israeli scientists face boycotts from many institutions."



Max Planck Society opens office in Jerusalem

The office in Jerusalem aims to foster cooperation even in difficult times

DECEMBER 03, 2024

International Research Policy

The Max Planck Society's new office in Jerusalem began its operations with Hila Elroy as the head of office as of 1 September 2024. Elroy, who has worked closely with Ron Robin, the former President of the University of Haifa for many years, also brings extensive expertise in international science management. The office is located at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, highlighting the long-standing collaboration between the Max Planck Society and the Institute, built on shared commitments to scientific excellence, innovation, democracy, and pluralism.



Patrick Cramer (2nd from right) at the opening ceremony of the Max Planck Office in Israel together with the Israeli President Isaac Herzog (3rd from right).
© Yoni Kelbermann/MPG

Figure 1) Left: Israel's President Isaac Herzog signing artillery shells during a military visit in the buffer zone along the land borders with the Gaza Strip in December 2023¹⁰⁷. Right: MPS President and Israel's President Isaac Herzog sitting next to each other at the opening ceremony of the new MPS office in Jerusalem in November 2024¹⁰⁸.

Israel's President Isaac Herzog is on record at the ICJ in the case *South Africa vs Israel* concerning the crime of genocide with the following statement: On 12 October 2023, Mr Isaac Herzog, President of Israel, stated, referring to Gaza: "It is an entire nation out there that is responsible. It is not true this rhetoric about civilians

¹⁰² <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-19-november-2024>

¹⁰³ <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/social-media/israel-posts-video-saying-are-no-innocent-civilians-gaza-rcna157111>

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/11/un-special-committee-finds-israels-warfare-methods-gaza-consistent-genocide>

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.mpg.de/23817894/max-planck-society-opens-office-in-israel>

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.mpg.de/23765145/20241124-education-science-and-a-peaceful-future.pdf>

¹⁰⁷ <https://x.com/declassifiedUK/status/1963911689264312648> (Picture: ©Reproduction from social media)

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.mpg.de/23817894/max-planck-society-opens-office-in-israel> (Picture: ©Yoni Kelbermann/MPG)

not aware, not involved. It is absolutely not true.”¹⁰⁹

May 2025: The death toll in Gaza sat at 54.000 people, mostly women and children. After three months of complete blockade of aid by Israel, over a million people faced emergency levels of food insecurity and 470.000 people faced catastrophic levels of food insecurity. 90% of the housing units and of the educational structures (now used as shelters by the displaced population) were declared severely damaged¹¹⁰. Meanwhile, the Max Planck Society President visited Israel to receive an Honorary Doctorate from the Bar-Ilan University¹¹¹. Shortly after, on the occasion of the spring meeting of the Minerva Fellowship Committee, the German and Israeli Minerva Fellowship holders were invited to Berlin¹¹². The MPS President was present at the ceremony¹¹³ with Federal Minister of Education Cem Özdemir, the Chancellor of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Menahem Ben-Sasson, Israeli Ambassador to Germany Ron Prosor, and Dr. Alon Stopel, Chairman of the Innovation Authority and Chief Scientist for Innovation at the Israel Ministry of Innovation, Science and Technology. Dr. Stopel was, until March 2024, the Vice President and Chief Scientist of ELBIT, with past senior positions in the Directorate for Research and Development of Military Weapons and Technological Infrastructure of the Israel Ministry of Defense¹¹⁴.

The inclusion of Dr. Stopel is significant given Elbit Systems’ documented role as a major supplier to Israel’s military and its reported involvement in weapons and surveillance systems used in Israeli military operations in Gaza¹¹⁵.

June 2025: By this point, the death toll in Gaza sat at more than 56.000 – mostly women and children¹¹⁶. During the complete blockade of aid by Israel, the number of malnutrition-related deaths was increasing, especially amongst children. Meanwhile, more than 700 people were killed whilst searching for food at the Israel-United States’s “Gaza Humanitarian Foundation” (GHF) distribution points^{117,118}. In the same month, the Max Planck Society’s President was present at Technion’s 100 Board of Governors, where he received Technion’s President’s “Award for Exceptional Achievements”, and where he was part of a panel discussing “Fighting Antisemitism”^{119,120}. Technion’s President, Prof. Uri Sivan, thanked the MPS for its role in supporting the defense of Israel, while Prof. Emeritus Peretz Lavie, the moderator of the panel, labelled the statement “Free Palestine” as “a rallying cry for violence against Jews, synagogues, and communities.”. The MPS President focused his speech on collaboration. Here is a short extract from his speech:

"While many around the world believe this is the time to sever ties with Israel, we believe that strengthening scientific bridges is vital for all parties(...)"

Israel’s President Isaac Herzog was at the opening ceremony of the event¹²¹. The

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-00-en.pdf>, para. 53.

¹¹⁰ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-21-may-2025>

¹¹¹ <https://www.biu.ac.il/en/article/583481>

¹¹² <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/17649/minerva-meeting-in-berlin>

¹¹³ https://www.bmfr.bund.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/EN/WTZ/BMBF_WTZ_Programm_vormittag_A4_barrierefrei_07.pdf

¹¹⁴ <https://innovationisrael.org.il/en/contact/alon-stopel-ph-d/>

¹¹⁵ <https://investigate.info/company/elbit-systems>

¹¹⁶ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-25-june-2025>

¹¹⁷ <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/latest/us-backed-aid-distribution-points-gaza-are-sites-orchestrated-killing>

¹¹⁸ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/08/un-experts-alarmed-reports-enforced-disappearances-gaza-humanitarian>

¹¹⁹ <https://www.technion.ac.il/en/blog/article/antisemitism-is-a-cancer-that-has-been-spreading-for-decades-in-american/>

¹²⁰ https://www.technion.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Technion_BOG_biz1.pdf

¹²¹ <https://www.technion.ac.il/en/blog/article/the-technion-is-a-miracle/>

program of Technion's 100 Board of Governors also included a visit to the Rafael Advanced Defense System at the Leshem Institute¹¹³.

September 2025: By this point, the death toll in Gaza had risen to 65.000, including more than 18.000 children^{122,123}. Due to Israel's continuous blockade of food and aid, a famine had been declared in the Gaza City governorate, with almost 2 million people being identified as facing a crisis of acute food insecurity¹²⁴. The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel found that¹²⁵ "Israel is responsible for the commission of genocide in Gaza. It is clear that there is an intent to destroy the Palestinians in Gaza through acts that meet the criteria set forth in the Genocide Convention.". In the same month, the Max Planck Society's Minerva Foundation opened a call for the creation of "up to two Minerva Centers in 2026."¹²⁶.

November 2025: Reports revealed that the death toll in Gaza had risen to 70.000, including more than 20.000 children^{127,128}. Two reports from the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese, denounced the complicity of Germany and of Germany's universities^{129,130} in the genocide. Meanwhile, the level of repression of the voices opposing Israel's conducts drove several UN Special Rapporteurs to urge Germany to halt the criminalization and the police violence against Palestinian solidarity activism¹³¹. The Max Planck Society President received an honorary PhD from the Weizmann Institute of Science¹³². Shortly after, a new Max Planck Center for Democracy, Security and Human Rights was opened at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem^{133,134}. This new center has a budget of 5 million euros over five years and has Prof. Barak Medina as one of its directors, and Prof. Yuval Shany as one of its co-directors. The MPS President was at the opening ceremony of the center in Jerusalem. In his speech, for the new center on "Democracy, Security and Human Rights", he didn't mention the genocide in Gaza, nor the suppression of freedom of speech in Germany¹³⁵. Here is a short extract from the speech:

"Looking back at two very difficult years, I want to express deep respect, gratitude, and admiration to you – the academic community – and to all the citizens of Israel who spoke out against war, and for peace and human rights(...). I am sure we will meet again soon. But for now, let me assure you that the Max Planck Society will continue to stand against boycotts, to fight antisemitism, and to ensure that Israeli science remains an active part of the European research community."

Shortly after, researchers from the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research

¹²² <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-12-november-2025>

¹²³ <https://www.unicef.org/sop/stories/after-two-years-war-gazas-education-system-brink-collapse>

¹²⁴ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-17-september-2025>

¹²⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/09/israel-has-committed-genocide-gaza-strip-un-commission-finds>

¹²⁶ <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/85079/call-for-proposals-minerva-centers-2025-26>

¹²⁷ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-12-november-2025>

¹²⁸ <https://www.unicef.org/sop/stories/after-two-years-war-gazas-education-system-brink-collapse>

¹²⁹ <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/a-hrc-59-23-from-economy-of-occupation-to-economy-of-genocide-report-special-rapporteur-francesca-albanese-palestine-2025/>

¹³⁰ <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/special-rapporteur-report-gaza-genocide-a-collective-crime-20oct25/>

¹³¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/10/un-experts-urge-germany-halt-criminalisation-and-police-violence-against>

¹³² <https://www.weizmann.ca/seven-unique-voices-in-the-symphony-of-human-achievement/>

¹³³ <https://www.mpg.de/25704767/max-planck-center-for-democracy-security-and-human-rights>

¹³⁴ <https://www.bfhu.org/2025/11/11/the-hebrew-university-and-max-planck-society-launch-international-center-for-democracy-security-and-human-rights/>

¹³⁵ <https://www.mpg.de/25712094/20251111-max-planck-center-jerusalem.pdf>

and the Center for Demographic Studies, Rostock, updated a paper¹³⁶, published in October 2025¹³⁷, with estimations that the death toll in Gaza, by October 6 2025, had likely surpassed 100.000 deaths.

December 2025: After a two-year hiatus, the Minerva Weizmann Committee had a meeting at the Weizmann Institute, selecting 32 new projects¹³⁸. The director of the Max Planck Institute for Heart and Lung Research, the director of the Max Planck Institute of Molecular Genetics, Berlin, and the director of the Max Planck Institute for Brain Research, Frankfurt, were present at the meeting.

Taken together, this chronology does not point to an absence of ethical awareness within the Max Planck Society, but rather to a patterned hierarchization in how such principles are applied. Across the timeline, moments in which the MPS invokes the responsibility of science, particularly when disciplining individual researchers (like Prof. G. Hage) or safeguarding its institutional reputation, stand in stark contrast to its continued expansion and public celebration of collaborations with Israeli institutions, whilst omitting the critical destruction of Palestinian educational institutions. These sustained partnerships, maintained and even deepened over time, function not merely as neutral scientific exchanges but as forms of institutional alignment that risk concealing, normalizing, and downplaying the gravity of Israel's conduct. This includes well-documented, and widely reported practices associated with occupation, apartheid, and, as increasingly recognized by international bodies, acts consistent with genocide. In this context, the selective invocation of ethical standards appears institutionally inconsistent. The role of science as a socially responsible institution is strongly emphasized in certain internal contexts, while sustained collaborations with Israeli institutions linked to military structures and practices raising serious human rights concerns have largely remained unaffected. This discrepancy raises broader ethical, political and legal questions regarding the application of the Max Planck Society's own principles of responsibility and "do no harm".

2.2) Discursive Framings of Policies Affecting Palestinians

Problematic quotes from key figures of the Minerva Center for Human Rights

Several public statements by figures institutionally affiliated with the Minerva Center raise concerns regarding the framing of Palestinian civilian protection, international law, and Israeli military conduct. The following list is by no means exhaustive, but sheds light on the concerning nature of ideas and narratives being promoted by those at the center.

Prof. Dr. Barak Medina is the director of the Minerva Center for Human Rights and the co-director of the new Max Planck Center for Democracy, Security and Human

¹³⁶ <https://www.mpg.de/25778228/1125-defo-gaza-study-reveals-unprecedented-losses-of-life-and-life-expectancy-154642-x>

¹³⁷ Gómez-Ugarte, A.C., et al., *Popul Health Metrics* 23, 55 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12963-025-00422-9>

¹³⁸ <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/120759/minerva-weizmann-meeting-2025>

Rights opened at the Hebrew University in November 2025 (see Paragraph 2.1). In 2019, while he was the Rector of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Prof. Medina supported the use of the University's campus on Mount Scopus by the IDF during the raids, blockade and occupation of the nearby Palestinian village of Issawiya (Maya Wind, 2024).

In "Medina, Barak; Enoch, David, *What is Permissible in the War against Hamas?*, VerfBlog, 17/10/2023"¹³⁹, Prof. Medina states:

"The threat [from Hamas] is significant enough to justify attempting to kill anyone associated with the organization, directly or indirectly (...) If the relevant acts are morally forbidden, they must not be carried out even if international law permits them; and given what is at stake, if they are morally justified, they should be carried out even if it means violating international law".

Prof. Dr. Anne Peters is the Director of the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law in Heidelberg and the Chair of the Minerva Center for Human Rights. Prof. Peters was part of the representation for Germany during the procedures instituted by Nicaragua concerning the "Alleged Breaches of Certain International Obligations in Respect of the Occupied Palestinian Territory" in April 2024¹⁴⁰.

In March 2024, Prof. Dr. Medina and Dr. Anne Peters published an article together in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* titled "Terror militärisch bekämpfen?"¹⁴¹ (English translation: "How to combat terrorism militarily?"). In the article it is suggested that, due to "ample evidence" that Hamas is using civil infrastructures for military purposes, the loss of special legal protection for civil infrastructures such as hospitals in Gaza may be justified. Prof Medina also underlines that the accusations of genocide against Israel ignore the "role of Hamas".

No "ample evidence" that "Hamas is using civil infrastructures for military purposes" is given in the article and, despite similar allegations from Israel's army, insufficient and unsubstantial proofs have been given by the IDF to validate these claims^{142,143}.

The Max Planck Society's President, Prof. Dr. Patrick Cramer, praised the article, on his personal X account, describing it as an "Important International Law assessment."¹⁴⁴

Furthermore, in her article titled "International Law and its Scholarship in the Time of Monsters", Dr. Anne Peters writes¹⁴⁵:

"Those who denounce the "genocide" against Palestinians do not necessarily mean the crime in a technical sense, but use the word to decry the complete dominance (up to physical extermination) of populations of the Global South by the resource-hungry North. The current intellectual and political rift, manifest at the North-Western universities, has lost touch with the specific and concrete features of the conflict, and the fixation on the evil "North" , represented by Israel,

¹³⁹ <https://doi.org/10.59704/f18c8b43c6d12f1a>

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.icj-cij.org/node/203882>

¹⁴¹ <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/terror-militaerisch-bekaempfen-19568184.html>

¹⁴² <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/opt/20241231-attacks-hospitals-gaza-en.pdf>

¹⁴³ <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/security-council-debates-israeli-attacks-on-hospitals-allegedly-misused-by-hamas-as-un-rights-chief-urges-independent-probes-press-release/>

¹⁴⁴ <https://x.com/mpgpresident/status/1765727823715582260>

¹⁴⁵ <https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm>

tends to downplay or deny the agency of Palestinians, of Hamas, and of neighbouring Arab states."

Prof. Yuval Shany is one of the editors-in-chief of *Israel Law Review*¹⁴⁶ at the Minerva Center for Human Rights and one of the co-directors of the new Max Planck Center for Democracy, Security and Human Rights at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (see Paragraph 2.1). In December 2024, he published an article on *Just Security* titled "A Cramped Interpretation of International Jurisprudence? Some Critical Observations on the Amnesty International Genocide Report on Gaza"¹⁴⁷. The article suggests factors such as population density or Hamas' disregard for the lives of Palestinians as possible causes of the high death toll in Gaza, as well as the impossibility for the civilians to leave the area due to the reluctance of the neighboring countries. Throughout the whole article, Israel's disproportionate use of force and violation of international law are referred to as claims by observers. Notably, Prof. Shany states that "one main aim of the report was to maximize its public shaming effect" (speaking about the Amnesty International Genocide Report on Gaza¹⁴⁸).

Judge Prof. Daphne Barak-Erez is part of the *International Advisory Board, Israel Law Review* of the Minerva Center for Human Rights¹⁴⁹ and a member of the Supreme Court of Israel. As a justice of the Israeli Supreme Court, she has participated in rulings criticized by human rights organizations as well as legal academics as contributing to the maintenance of occupation and unequal legal regimes¹⁵⁰. These include laws that reinforce Israel's Jewish ethnonationalism and encourage settler colonialism¹⁵¹, approval of the arbitrary detention of Palestinians without charges or trial¹⁵², dispossession and expulsion of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory¹⁵³, the destruction of Palestinian homes as a form of collective punishment¹⁵⁴, and the rejection of the petition of the Foreign Press Association to access the besieged Gaza¹⁵⁵ in January 2025.

Problematic statements from members of the Minerva Center for the Rule of Law under Extreme Conditions

Members of the Minerva Center for the Rule of Law Under Extreme Conditions have also reproduced discourses which risk legitimizing further infringements on the rights of Palestinians. A page of the website of the Minerva Center titled "Iron Swords: Israel-Hamas war in Gaza"¹⁵⁶, lists several statements made by Minerva Center members in newspapers, blogs or other media. The following are two examples.

Ido Rosenzweig is the Director of Research of the *Multiple and Cascading Extreme*

¹⁴⁶ <https://en.minervacenter.huji.ac.il/editorial-staff-0>

¹⁴⁷ <https://www.justsecurity.org/105790/critical-amnesty-international-gaza-genocide/>

¹⁴⁸ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/12/amnesty-international-concludes-israel-is-committing-genocide-against-palestinians-in-gaza/>

¹⁴⁹ <https://en.minervacenter.huji.ac.il/advisory-boards-and-academic-committees>

¹⁵⁰ Statement of over a Hundred International Academics and Lawyers Writing to Law & Society Institute (LSI), Humboldt University Berlin Seeking Reflection on Lack of Academic Integrity Re: Gaza, *Völkerrechtsblog*, 27.05.2025, DOI: 10.17176/20250627-083114-0.

¹⁵¹ *Ref. Hasson v. The Knesset*, HCJ 5555/18, December 22, 2020

¹⁵² *Ref. for example, John Doe v. Minister of Defense, Admin Detention Appeal*, 406/21, January 28, 2021

¹⁵³ *Ref. Sarahan v. The Custodian General*, HCJ 7446/17, November 21, 2018

¹⁵⁴ *Ref. Rabha v. Military Commander of the West Bank*, HCJ 480/21, January 27, 2021

¹⁵⁵ *Ref. TOI Staff, High Court says Israel can keep barring foreign reporters from Gaza*, January 10th, 2025, *Times of Israel*

¹⁵⁶ <https://minervaxtremelaw.haifa.ac.il/2024/01/28/iron-swords-israel-hamas-war-in-gaza/>

Conditions Research at the Minerva Center¹⁵⁷. In a blog published in June 2024 in *The Times of Israel* titled "In Gaza: Unveiling 'No Uninvolved' Civilians"¹⁵⁸, Dr. Rosenzweig discusses the statement "there are no uninvolved civilians in Gaza." According to him, it is difficult to say if the statement is accurate or not, as it is difficult to discern between civilians "involved" and civilians "actively taking part in hostilities." Dr. Rosenzweig makes the example of "civilians who handed out candies in Gaza" and "civilians who kidnapped and actively assisted in the kidnappings" on October 7th, or of "a civilian in whose home Hamas weapons are stored under children's beds, and a civilian who keeps a hostage in their home or assists in moving them."

Rosenzweig's statements weaken the category of the civilian, particularly the legal obligation to protect civilians living under an illegal occupation. This is crucial not only because the distinction between civilian and combatant is central to international law, but also because the repeated state invocation of civilians not being worthy of legal protection made Israeli grave violations of international law, including the crime of genocide, possible in the first place.

Dr. Robert Neufeld is a research fellow at the Minerva Center. In January 2024, he wrote a post in *The Jerusalem Post* titled "The 'Palestinianization' of international law – opinion."¹⁵⁹ According to Dr. Neufeld, the entire corpus of international law is under the process of "Palestinization". Concepts like occupation, apartheid and genocide are "Palestinized" and trivialized "to fit into the Palestinized paradigm."

While this article still falls within the scope of protected speech, the article trivializes Palestinian grievances pursued before an international court. According to research guidelines, statements made by MPS-funded scholars need to align with the norms of international law rather than ridiculing attempts to bring justice via international law.

While dismissing Prof. Ghassan Hage for a post on his personal blog and stating that "Racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, discrimination, hatred, and agitation have no place in the Max Planck Society."¹⁶⁰, the MPS did not take any action or issue similar statements in cases, such as the ones presented above, involving its Israeli affiliates, effectively rendering Palestinian lives less worthy of protection.

2.3) Academic Involvement with the IDF

Conference on the War in Gaza with a speaker from the IDF

In December 2024, the Minerva Center for Human Rights organised the 19th Annual Minerva Conference on International Humanitarian Law titled "The Gaza War and International Law: Norms and Institutions"¹⁶¹. As part of the conference, a talk titled "The distinctive feature of the Hamas-Israel War", was given by Brig. Gen. Roni Katzir, head of the IDF International Law Branch¹⁶² (see Figure 3).

¹⁵⁷ <https://minervaxtremelaw.haifa.ac.il/2021/10/10/adv-ido-rosenzweig-director-of-belligerencies-and-terrorism/>

¹⁵⁸ <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/in-gaza-unveiling-no-uninvolved-civilians/>

¹⁵⁹ <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-782647>

¹⁶⁰ <https://www.mpg.de/21510445/statement-ghassan-hage>

¹⁶¹ <https://en.minervacenter.huji.ac.il/2024-events-0#IHL19>

¹⁶² https://en.minervacenter.huji.ac.il/sites/default/files/minervacenteren/files/minerva_conference_on_the_gaza_war.pdf

The session was chaired by Prof. Yuval Shany, member of the Center¹⁶³ and co-director of the new Max Planck Center for Democracy, Security and Human Rights which was opened at the Hebrew University in November 2025¹⁶⁴.

Such an academic event, held during a time in which the IDF was committing grave violations of international law, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, leaves the impression of normalising and legitimizing these actions.



Figure 3) Screenshots of the Minerva Center for Human Rights website: "The Gaza War and International Law: Norms and Institutions" organised by the Minerva Center for Human Rights¹⁶⁵ Left): Brig. Gen. Roni Katzir at the conference. The logo of the Minerva Center for Human Rights is visible behind him. Right): Brig. Gen. Roni Katzir and Prof. Yuval Shany at the same conference.

Academic events with members of the IDF and the ministry of defense

On multiple occasions, the *Minerva Center for the Rule of Law Under Extreme Conditions* invited Colonel (ret.) Adv. Pnina Sharvit Baruch to its conferences and workshops^{166,167,168,169,170}. Col. (ret.) Adv. Baruch, now a senior researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), served in the International Law Department of the Military Advocate General (MAG) Unit of the IDF, which she headed from 2003 to 2009. During this time, Israel led the military operation "Operation Cast Lead" in 2008. A UN fact finding mission attested violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law committed in the context of military operations conducted in Gaza during the period 27 Dec. 2008-18 Jan. 2009¹⁷¹. Amongst those crimes was an Israeli airstrike that killed eighty-nine Palestinian police cadets during their graduation ceremony in Gaza¹⁷²¹⁷³. Col. (ret.) Adv. Baruch led the legal team that approved the strike, contending that the cadets (civilians according to international law¹⁷⁴) could be considered combatants^(Maya Wind, 2024). Col. (ret.) Adv. Baruch also offered legal justification for the

¹⁶³ <https://en.minervacenter.huji.ac.il/staff>

¹⁶⁴ <https://www.mpg.de/25746858/max-planck-center-for-democracy-security-and-human-rights>

¹⁶⁵ <https://en.minervacenter.huji.ac.il/galleries/minerva-conference-gaza-war-and-international-law-17-182024>

¹⁶⁶ <https://minervaxtremelaw.haifa.ac.il/2019/05/22/legal-aspects-of-relief-operations-participants-biographies/>

¹⁶⁷ <https://minervaxtremelaw.haifa.ac.il/2018/01/28/young-researchers-workshop/>

¹⁶⁸ <https://minervaextremelaw.haifa.ac.il/index.php/en/2-uncategorised>

¹⁶⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch>

¹⁷⁰ <https://minervaxtremelaw.haifa.ac.il/2014/10/30/the-israeli-democracy-in-war-is-the-edge-protected/>

¹⁷¹ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/666096>

¹⁷² <https://dawnmena.org/how-israeli-universities-and-legal-scholars-collaborate-with-israels-military/>

¹⁷³ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2008/12/30/israel/gaza-civilians-must-not-be-targets>

¹⁷⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/professional-training/manual-hr-for-law-enforcement-officials-ch11.pdf>

tactic of targeting civilian buildings known as “roof knocking”¹⁷⁵. This tactic consists in bombing the roof of civilian infrastructure to “warn” civilians before targeting the infrastructure more severely (often within minutes).

Furthermore, in 2018 the center invited Maj. General (ret.) Dan Efrony, the former Military Advocate General of the Israel Defense Forces from 2011 to 2015, as a speaker to the conference titled “Legal Challenges of Terror”¹⁷⁶. During his period as MAG of the IDF, falls the 2014 Israeli attack on Gaza which is under investigation by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity and war crimes¹⁷⁷. The Military Advocate General is responsible for providing legal advice to the IDF for military operations^{178,179}, including attacks involving strikes on civilian infrastructures¹⁸⁰.

Collaboration with the National Knowledge and Research Center for Emergency Readiness

The Minerva Center for the Rule of Law Under Extreme Conditions collaborated with the National Knowledge and Research Center for Emergency and Readiness (NKRER), with different research projects during 2022-2025¹⁸¹. NKRER was founded in 2018 by the Israel Ministry of Science and Technology and by the Israel Ministry of Defense¹⁸² and closed in July 2025. Personnel from the IDF and MAFAT are listed in the Center Steering Committee¹⁸³. RAFAEL’s Center for Military Analysis is also part of NKRER, and, according to its website¹⁸⁴: “Some of the Center research in the last years is relevant to dealing with the war with Gaza and its aftermath.”

¹⁷⁵ <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/politics-and-diplomacy/icc-may-not-be-equipped-to-rule-on-war-crimes-468355>

¹⁷⁶ <https://minervaxtremelaw.haifa.ac.il/2018/05/10/legal-challenges-of-terror/>

¹⁷⁷ <https://www.icc-cpi.int/palestine>

¹⁷⁸ <https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/systemfiles/EfroniChallengesPosedbyInternationalLawintheContextofUrbanWarfare.pdf>

¹⁷⁹ <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/rule-of-law-efronis-wars-430505>

¹⁸⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/28/israel-policy-targeting-gaza-homes-human-rights>

¹⁸¹ <https://minervaxtremelaw.haifa.ac.il/2025/03/09/center-research/>

¹⁸² <https://muchanut.haifa.ac.il/index.php/en/>

¹⁸³ <https://muchanut.haifa.ac.il/index.php/en/about-eng/second-row/steering-committee>

¹⁸⁴ <https://muchanut.haifa.ac.il/index.php/en/2-uncategorised/243-iron-swords-the-war-with-gaza-2023>

Chapter 3

Military-Academic Entanglements at Max Planck's Minerva Centers at the Technion

Representative of
Israel Ministry of Defense,

Director of Max Planck Society's
Minerva Center at the Technion

[2019 ceremony at laboratory
in which the Minerva Center is located]



3.1) The Minerva Center for Micro Turbine Powered Energy Systems (MTPES)

The Minerva Center for Micro Turbine Powered Energy Systems (MTPES), opened in 2014, is part of the Aerospace Department of Technion and is directed by Prof. Beni Cukurel¹⁸⁵. The evidence suggests that the center is embedded within institutional frameworks explicitly oriented toward military applications (see also Appendix).

Funded by Israeli & US-American military institutions

The Minerva Center's director, Prof. Beni Cukurel, lists grants received from 2016-2024 under the category "Non-Competitive Defense-Impact Funding" on his publicly available CV¹⁸⁶. He received continuous funding from Israel's leading military institutions such as the Advanced Defence Research Institute of the Center for Security Science & Technology (ADRI), RAFAEL, IAI, and MAFAT (a joint administrative body of the Israel Ministry of Defense and the Israel Defense Forces¹⁸⁷). Furthermore, the Minerva Center's website lists grants it received from Israel Aerospace Industries, the US Office of Army Research and from ADRI^{188,189}.

Grants from ADRI

The Minerva Center lists a grant received from ADRI - also referred to as the Peter Munk Institute - on their website¹⁹⁰. The ADRI, is a military institute at Technion focused on making academic research applicable for the IDF¹⁹¹ and the ministry of defense. It is headed by Netanyahu's former National Security Advisor, Prof. Jacob Nagel¹⁹².

ADRI is also found on the CV of Beni Cukurel, the director of Max Planck's center, who lists two grants received from ADRI on his CV¹⁹³. In September 2024, Prof. Cukurel participated in a conference organized by ADRI titled "Security And the War on Terror: The Scientific Challenge"^{194,195}. The conference was attended by

**Netanyahu advisor
Jacob Nagel**



Director of ADRI

ADRI



Grants / Funding to

Participation in ADRI
conference

**Max Planck Society's
Minerva Center MTPES
at Technion, Israel**



¹⁸⁵ <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/centers/list/minerva-center-for-micro-turbine-powered-energy-systems>

¹⁸⁶ https://ese.iyte.edu.tr/wp-content/uploads/sites/86/2023/02/BeniCukurel_TechnionCV-1.pdf

¹⁸⁷ <https://ddrd-mafat.mod.gov.il/en>

¹⁸⁸ <https://mtpes.net.technion.ac.il/additional-grants-procured/>

¹⁸⁹ The grant received from CSST-ADRI is referenced on the MTPES website as "The 'Peter Munk' Research Institute, Center for Security Science & Technology". Peter Munk is the name of the main donor to the center.

¹⁹⁰ <https://mtpes.net.technion.ac.il/additional-grants-procured/>

¹⁹¹ <https://adri.technion.ac.il/about-us/>

¹⁹² <https://www.fdd.org/team/jacob-nagel/>

¹⁹³ https://ese.iyte.edu.tr/wp-content/uploads/sites/86/2023/02/BeniCukurel_TechnionCV-1.pdf

¹⁹⁴ <https://adri.technion.ac.il/conferences/>

¹⁹⁵ <https://adri.technion.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/%D7%AA%D7%95%D7%9B%D7%A0%D7%99%D7%AA-%D7%9B%D7%A0%D7%A1-%D7%91%D7%99%D7%98%D7%97%D7%95%D7%9F-%D7%95%D7%9E%D7%9C%D7%97%D7%9E%D7%9424-.pdf>

members of MAFAT, IDF, and RAFAEL¹⁹⁶. The title of his contribution to the conference was: “UMGT – ULTRA MICRO GAS TURBINE POWERED ENERGY SYSTEM”. Research on the same topic (UMGTs) was published by Prof. Cukurel in October 2024 in two papers¹⁹⁷ that acknowledge both the Max Planck Society and ADRI (‘Peter Munk, Center for Security, Science and Technology’) in its “Funding Data” section. As stated in the papers’ abstract,¹⁹⁸ UMGTs are relevant for drones. Another paper written by MTPES researchers and Cukurel also acknowledges both the Max Planck Society and ADRI as sponsors¹⁹⁹.

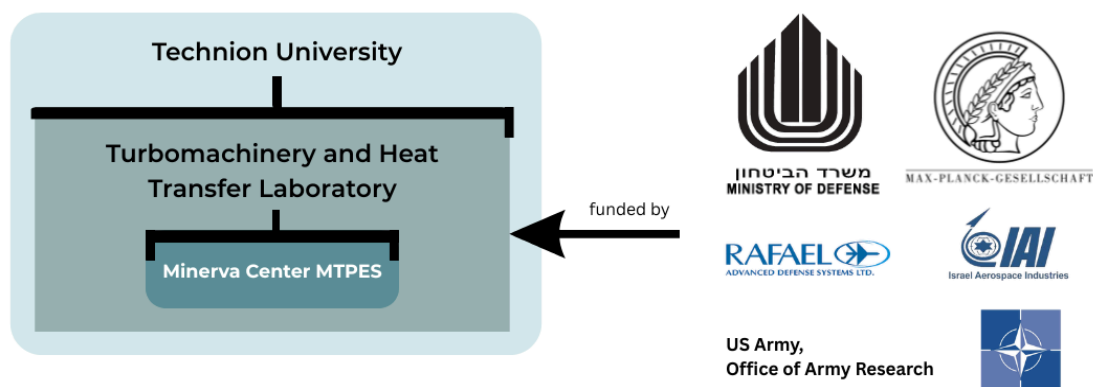
“Gaza still harbors thousands of terrorists and eradicating them will take years”

Jacob Nagel, the director of ADRI, is one of the closest associates of Benjamin Netanyahu. In 2025 Netanyahu appointed Nagel as the chair for a special committee tasked to examine the IDF strategy for the next decade and IDF force design²⁰⁰. He concludes: “Gaza still harbors thousands of terrorists and eradicating them will take years.”²⁰¹

In March 2025, Jacob Nagel stated²⁰²: “During the (Gaza) war, we rapidly turned academic concepts into operational solutions for the battlefield”. Jacob Nagel can thus be considered to be the key connector between academia and practical military applications in the genocide. (See Appendix for further details).

Embedded in military-funded laboratory

The MTPES operates within Technion’s Turbomachinery and Heat Transfer Laboratory, with which it also shares the same director, Prof. Cukurel^{203,204}. The laboratory’s website lists its funders²⁰⁵: Minerva Foundation, US Army, US Navy, NATO, IAI, MAFAT, and RAFAEL, amongst others (see the figure below).



The case of Max Planck’s Minerva Center at Technion, the MTPES, demonstrates that the Max Planck Society not only collaborates with military-funded Israeli institutions – its Minerva Center is physically and institutionally situated within a laboratory that also lists military and defense-sector funders. A publicly accessible

¹⁹⁶ <https://adri.technion.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/%D7%AA%D7%95%D7%9B%D7%A0%D7%99%D7%AA-%D7%9B%D7%A0%D7%A1-%D7%91%D7%99%D7%98%D7%97%D7%95%D7%9F-%D7%95%D7%9E%D7%9C%D7%97%D7%9E%D7%9424-.pdf>

¹⁹⁷ <https://doi.org/10.1115/1.4064825>; <https://doi.org/10.1115/1.4064826>

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ <https://asmedigitalcollection.asme.org/gasturbinespower/article/146/2/021006/1166787/Ceramic-and-Metal-Additive-Manufacturing-of>

²⁰⁰ https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/netanyahu-convenes-new-special-committee-focused-on-national-ai-strategy/

²⁰¹ <https://ats.org/our-impact/the-nagel-committee-report/>

²⁰² <https://ats.org/our-impact/the-nagel-committee-report/>

²⁰³ <https://ats.org/about/faces-of-the-technion/beni-cukurel/>

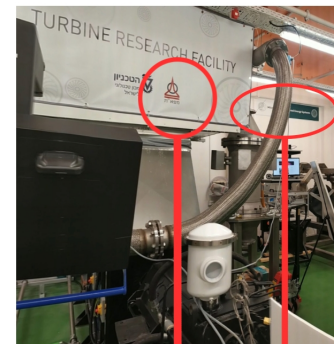
²⁰⁴ <https://bcukurel.net.technion.ac.il/>

²⁰⁵ <https://bcukurel.net.technion.ac.il/grants/>

virtual tour²⁰⁶ of the Turbomachinery and Heat Transfer Laboratory, which hosts Max Planck's MTPES, shows how the MTPES operates alongside military research projects conducted with RAFAEL, MAFAT, and the Israeli Air Force (see also Appendix).

Logos of MAFAT and Max Planck's MTPES

A Virtual Lab Tour shows a red “DDR&D” Logo on machinery in the “Test Cell Area” room. The Logo stands for “Directorate of Defence Research & Development” (Hebrew: “Mafat”). Right behind it on a wall, the Max Planck Society's MTPES logo is visible.



Logos of Max Planck Society's MTPES

The Virtual Lab Tour also shows the Max Planck Society's MTPES Logo in the “Small Engine Test Facilities” room. These are only two examples of the display of the Max Planck Society's logo in the Turbomachinery and Heat Transfer Laboratory. It is also visible in the “Test Cell - Area1”, in the “Combustion Testing Area” and in the “Low Speed Test Facilities - Area 2”.



Machinery shared with military-related projects

The “Combustion Engine Area” of the Turbomachinery and Heat Transfer Laboratory shows the MTPES Logo on the “Capstone Microturbine”. This Turbine is also displayed on the Max Planck Society's website²⁰⁷ (see Appendix), and on the website of another project of the Lab, the “Zirmey Silon Project”²⁰⁸, which states its mission explicitly as "Enhancing educational initiatives in cooperation with industry leaders and the IDF". The Zirmey Silon Project is supported by RAFAEL, Bet Shemesh Engines, MAFAT, and the Israeli Air Force. It is directed by Prof. Cukurel who also directs Max Planck's MTPES and the entire Laboratory.



²⁰⁶ <https://app.lapentor.com/sphere/turbomachinery-and-heat-transfer-lab>

²⁰⁷ <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/centers/list/minerva-center-for-micro-turbine-powered-energy-systems>

²⁰⁸ <https://zirmey-silon.technion.ac.il/>

Military-funded projects

A poster titled “Adaptive Cycle Micro-Turbofan Engine”²⁰⁹ is shown just under Max Planck’s MTPES logo in the “Test Cell - Area2” room²¹⁰. The project, focused on engines for unmanned aircraft systems (drones), was part of the Zirmey Silon Project²¹¹, and was also supported by NATO and by the US Office of Naval Research²¹².



In the “Small Engine Test Facilities”, the Virtual lab tour also shows posters of research projects such as the “AELUS project”^{213,214}, which is conducted in collaboration with MAFAT and RAFAEL.



Conference organized by MTPES’s director and representative of Israel’s ministry of defense

The "Israel Symposium on Jet Engines & Gas Turbines" is a conference organized by MTPES director Beni Cukurel and members of the Israeli Ministry of Defence, of the Israel Air Force and of RAFAEL²¹⁵. The sponsors of the 18th AIJES (2019) included Max Planck Society’s Minerva Stiftung, RAFAEL, IAI, Bet Shemens Engines, the Israeli Air Force and MAFAT (see Appendix)^{216,217}. Furthermore, companies connected to Israel’s defense sector and producing components for military applications, such as Carmel Metal Ltd.²¹⁸, Motion Tech Ltd.²¹⁹, and Turbogogen Ltd.^{220,221}, presented their products at the conference²²². Prof. Cukurel’s talk at the conference was titled: “Development of Ultra-Compact Micro Gas Turbines with 400W Electric Power Output as a Battery Replacement in Drones”.

Photos of the 18th AIJES Conference in 2019 are available together with pictures of the ceremony for the opening of the renovated buildings of the Turbomachinery

²⁰⁹ <https://bcukurel.net.technion.ac.il/files/2021/07/Adaptive-Cycle-Engine.pdf>

²¹⁰ <https://app.lapentor.com/sphere/turbomachinery-and-heat-transfer-lab>

²¹¹ <https://zirmey-silon.technion.ac.il/versatile-adaptive-micro-turbofan-engine-development-for-uas-applications/>

²¹² <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/trecms/pdf/AD1154923.pdf>

²¹³ <https://zirmey-silon.technion.ac.il/sponsored-research-projects/uav-senior-design-7-8-project-2019-2020/>

²¹⁴ <https://app.lapentor.com/sphere/turbomachinery-and-heat-transfer-lab>

²¹⁵ <https://aijes.net.technion.ac.il/organizing-committee/>

²¹⁶ <https://aijes.net.technion.ac.il/files/2020/10/BOOK-OF-ABSTRACT-AIJES-18th.pdf>

²¹⁷ <https://aijes.net.technion.ac.il/sponsors/>

²¹⁸ <https://www.m-carmel.com/industries/defense/>

²¹⁹ <https://www.motiontech.co.il/en/>

²²⁰ <https://turbogogenchp.com/products/>

²²¹ <https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/67296>

²²² <https://aijes.net.technion.ac.il/files/2020/10/BOOK-OF-ABSTRACT-AIJES-18th.pdf>

and Heat Transfer Laboratory^{223,224,225}. The photos show Max Planck's MTPES director Beni Cukurel cutting the ceremony's ribbon together with Major Yigal Ben-Shabat, head of the Propulsion Systems Branch of the Aeronautical Division of Israel's Ministry of Defense (see Figure 4). Major Yigal Ben-Shabat is also amongst the speakers of the conference's opening session²²⁶.



Figure 4: Prof. Cukurel, head of the MTPES, is seen cutting the ribbon at the ceremony for the opening of the renovated buildings of the Turbomachinery and Heat Transfer Laboratory together with Major Yigal Ben-Shabat, head of the Propulsion Systems Branch of the Aeronautical Division of Israel's Ministry of Defense^{227,228}.

Papers co-authored and co-financed with Israeli and US military institutions

Further evidence of extensive collaborations can be found in publications focusing on research areas with foreseeable military application for unmanned aerial vehicles (drones). Published papers listed on the MTPES website list co-authors from RAFAEL and the US Air Force Research Laboratory^{229,230}, with the Minerva Foundation acknowledged as funder alongside the US Army Research Laboratory, ADRI²³¹, and the *Meimad Program Grant*²³².

The Meimad Program is, according to MAFAT's website²³³, "A joint program of DDR&D, the Israel Innovation Authority, and the Ministry of Finance for dual-use military, security, and commercial R&D." The program is "intended for companies, entrepreneurs, and academic institutions conducting applied technological research aimed at developing military and commercial applications. From pre-product development to the technological prototype stage".

²²³ <https://aijes.net.technion.ac.il/gallery/>

²²⁴ <https://photos.app.goo.gl/gAKxZeHnrAM6FChV7>

²²⁵ <https://aerospace.technion.ac.il/news/official-opening-of-the-turbomachinery-heat-transfer-laboratory/>

²²⁶ <https://aijes.net.technion.ac.il/files/2020/10/BOOK-OF-ABSTRACT-AIJES-18th.pdf>

²²⁷ <https://aijes.net.technion.ac.il/gallery/>

²²⁸ <https://photos.app.goo.gl/gAKxZeHnrAM6FChV7>

²²⁹ <https://doi.org/10.1115/1.4063923>

²³⁰ <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijheatmasstransfer.2025.127642>

²³¹ <https://doi.org/10.1115/1.4063421>; <https://doi.org/10.1115/1.4064825>; <https://doi.org/10.1115/1.4064826>

²³² <http://innovation-israel-en.mag.calltext.co.il/magazine/45/pages/35>

²³³ <https://ddrd-mafat.mod.gov.il/en/maf-at-for-startups/meimad>

Conferences with the presence of the IDF and Israeli arms companies

MTPES researchers organise and participate in conferences where representatives of the Israeli military-industrial-complex serve as sponsors, keynote speakers, and organising committee members. In some cases, the Max Planck Society appears as a sponsor. The following are a few examples:

- In November 2019, a MTPES workshop hosted attendees from MAFAT, Israeli Air Force, Bet Shemesh Engines, RAFAEL, Israeli Aircraft Industries²³⁴.
- The 18th Israel Symposium on Jet Engines & Gas Turbines (AIJES 2019) listed the Max Planck Society and the Minerva Foundation as sponsors alongside MAFAT, IAI, RAFAEL, and the Israel Air Force^{235,236}. Conference photographs²³⁷ document Professor Cukurel – director of the MTPES – with MAFAT members at the opening ceremony where machinery connected to the MTPES was displayed (see Appendix).
- The 62nd Israel Annual Conference on Aerospace Science (IACAS, 2023) was chaired by Brigadier General Shlomi Konforty, head of the Materiel Directorate at the Israeli Air Force, while the chairman of the program committee was Prof. Cukurel²³⁸.
- The 11th Conference on Propulsion Technologies for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (January 2025), sponsored by MAFAT, IAI, and ELBIT, featured a keynote titled "Propulsion During War – User Perspective."^{239,240} held by a speaker from the IDF. MTPES principal investigator Prof. Eran Sher²⁴¹ served on the organizing committee with MAFAT and IDF representatives.
- The 64th Israel Annual Conference on Aerospace Science (IACAS, March 2025) was sponsored by RAFAEL, IAI, ELBIT, and the Israel Air Force²⁴². Five out of the seven principal investigators listed on MTPES's website participated in the conference either as speakers or as chairs²⁴³.

3.2) AI, Surveillance, and Military Applications: The Franz Ollendorff Minerva Center

The *Franz Ollendorff Minerva Centre for Information and Automation* operated at Technion between 1985 and 2023^{244,245}. The following case study demonstrates how

²³⁴<https://mtpes.net.technion.ac.il/turbomachinery-workshop-on-advances-in-detonation-based-engines-and-relevant-unsteady-turbomachinery-flows/>

²³⁵ <https://aijes.net.technion.ac.il/files/2020/10/BOOK-OF-ABSTRACT-AIJES-18th.pdf>

²³⁶ <https://aijes.net.technion.ac.il/sponsors/>

²³⁷ <https://aijes.net.technion.ac.il/gallery/>

²³⁸ <https://www.technion.ac.il/en/blog/62nd-israel-conference-on-aerospace-sciences/>

²³⁹ <https://ptuav.net.technion.ac.il/>

²⁴⁰ https://ptuav.net.technion.ac.il/files/2024/12/11th-Conference_Conference-Program_12122024.pdf

²⁴¹ <https://mtpes.net.technion.ac.il/>

²⁴² <https://iacas.technion.ac.il/>

²⁴³ <https://iacas.technion.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/IACAS-2025-Program-V190325.pdf>

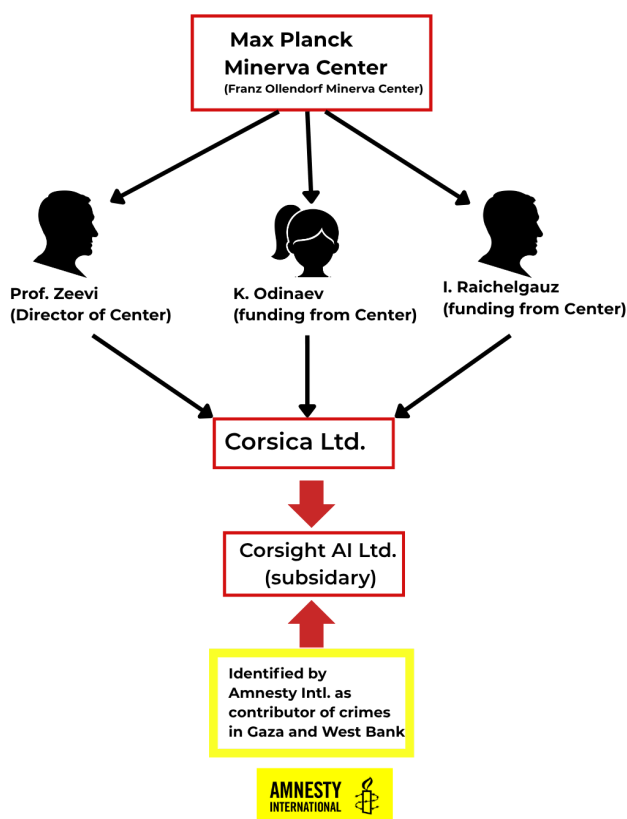
²⁴⁴ <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/centers/list/franz-ollendorff-minerva-center-for-information-and-automation>

²⁴⁵ Closed in August 2023 according to the MPS's website. Acknowledgements of fundings from the Center were found in publications released in 2025 (<https://ws.eventact.com/ilanramon2025/PosterVExhibition>; <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvcir.2025.104411>). The Center's website was updated in March 2025, when an article on the 125th anniversary of the birth of Franz Ollendorff was linked on it. In the article the Center is mentioned in the present tense, see: (<https://www.technion.ac.il/en/blog/article/125-years-since-the-birth-of-franz-ollendorff/>).

directors of Max Planck Society's Minerva Centers are linked to research later associated with military and surveillance application, in this case, facial recognition technology used for the surveillance of Palestinians.

Corsight AI Ltd: Technology used by the IDF

The Franz Ollendorff Minerva Centre's director, Prof. Yehoshua Y. Zeevi, is one of the co-founders of Cortica Ltd.²⁴⁶ The other co-founders are Karina Odinaev and Igal Raichelgauz, whose research received support from the Franz Ollendorff Minerva Center^{247,248}. In September 2025, Amnesty International listed one of Cortica's subsidiaries, Corsight AI Ltd^{249,250,251}, as one of the contributors to Israel's war crimes²⁵². Corsight AI's facial recognition technology has been used by the IDF in Gaza and in the West Bank²⁵³. According to an article published in *The New Arab* in 2024²⁵⁴, two scientific papers^{255,256}, published in 2006 by the co-founders of Cortica Ltd.²⁵⁷, were cited thirty-two and seven times respectively in Cortica patents. At the time, Raichelgauz and Odinaev were supervising undergraduate students at the Ollendorff Minerva Center, while Prof. Yehoshua Y. Zeevi was the director. A press release²⁵⁸ from 2012 acknowledged that the technology at the core of Cortica's products was developed at Technion. In 2024, the *New Arab* confronted the Max Planck Society about its involvement in the research at the core of Corsight AI's technology. The MPS denied any involvement in it²⁵⁹.



²⁴⁶ <https://t3.technion.ac.il/researcher/zeevi-yehoshua/>

²⁴⁷ <https://visl.technion.ac.il/projects/2006s25>

²⁴⁸ <https://visl.technion.ac.il/projects/2005s18/>

²⁴⁹ <https://www.corsight.ai/>

²⁵⁰ <https://nocamels.com/2020/04/israeli-startup-corsight-facial-recognition-tech-masked/>

²⁵¹ <https://investigate.afsc.org/company/corsight>

²⁵² <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/09/global-political-economy-enabling-israels-genocide-occupation-apartheid/>

²⁵³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/27/technology/israel-facial-recognition-gaza.html>

²⁵⁴ <https://www.newarab.com/investigations/how-german-academia-contributes-surveillance-palestinians#>

²⁵⁵ 10.1109/IJCNN.2006.246693, <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/abstract/document/1716104>

²⁵⁶ 10.1109/IEMBS.2006.260923, <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/abstract/document/4030634>

²⁵⁷ <https://patents.justia.com/assignee/corsight-ai-ltd>

²⁵⁸ <https://itrade.gov.il/uk/2012/08/02/israeli-start-up-cortica-raises-7m-from-horizons-ventures-and-ynon-kreiz/>

²⁵⁹ <https://www.newarab.com/investigations/how-german-academia-contributes-surveillance-palestinians#>

Chapter 4

Activities in the Occupied Palestinian and Syrian Territories



This is a photo of a hotel located in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. The occupation is illegal under international law, violating Article 2(4) of the Charter of the United Nations and UN Security Council Resolution 497 (17 December 1981).

Max Planck Society's Fritz Haber Minerva Center co-organized a workshop called "Unmasked - Open Quantum Systems in the Golan" at this hotel.

4.1) Academic Activities in Occupied and Annexed Territories

Workshops in occupied Syrian territories

The Fritz Haber Minerva Center for Molecular Dynamics co-organized a workshop titled "Unmasked - Open Quantum Systems in the Golan"^{260,261,262} in May 2021 at the *Hotel in Marom Golan*²⁶³, located in the annexed and illegally occupied Syrian territories of the Golan Heights²⁶⁴. The workshop was co-organised and co-sponsored by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Bar-Ilan University, the Technion, the Weizmann Institute of Science and the Tel Aviv University²⁶⁵, with participants from the same institutes²⁶⁶.

In May 2016, the Minerva Center for the Relations between Israel and Aram in Biblical Times (RIAB) organised a workshop titled "Field workshop to archaeological sites in NE Israel."²⁶⁷ According to its description, the visited sites include Tel Hadar²⁶⁸, an archeological site located in the annexed Syrian territories of the Golan Heights²⁶⁹.

Concerns about the legality of the campus on Mount Scopus

The Minerva Center for Human Rights is located in the Law Faculty of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem on Mount Scopus (together with two other Minerva Centers²⁷⁰). Part of the campus is located in the occupied Palestinian territory of East Jerusalem^(Maya Wind, 2024). In 2019, the campus was used as an operational base by Israeli police and the IDF for the raids of the Palestinian village of Issawiya^{271,(Maya Wind, 2024)}.

4.2) Archaeology, Settler Organizations, and Territorial Narratives

According to Article 9 of the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (The Hague, 26 March 1999)²⁷² "any illicit export, other removal or transfer of ownership of cultural property", "any archaeological excavation, save where this is strictly required to safeguard, record or preserve cultural property", and "any alteration to, or change of

²⁶⁰ <https://fhrc.huji.ac.il/news/seminars-conferences-and-workshops/workshops-and-conferences>

²⁶¹ <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n23/398/06/pdf/n2339806.pdf>

²⁶² https://fhrc.huji.ac.il/sites/default/files/f-h/files/workshop_program_2.pdf

²⁶³ <https://english.meromgolantourism.co.il/>

²⁶⁴ <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n23/398/06/pdf/n2339806.pdf>

²⁶⁵ <https://fhrc.huji.ac.il/news/unmasked-open-quantum-systems-golan-9-may-11-may>

²⁶⁶ https://fhrc.huji.ac.il/sites/default/files/f-h/files/list_of_participants_web.pdf

²⁶⁷ <https://www.aramisrael.org/post/4th-workshop-of-the-riab-center-field-workshop-to-archaeological-sites-in-ne-israel>

²⁶⁸ <https://whitelevy.fas.harvard.edu/tel-hadar-bronze-and-iron-age-community-central-levant-moshe-kochavi-and-pirhiya-beck-0>

²⁶⁹ The Article 9 of the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict requires the Occupying Power to 'prohibit and prevent, in relation to the occupied territory, any archaeological excavations (unless strictly required to safeguard, record or preserve such property). If such excavations do take place, they must be carried out in close cooperation with the competent national authorities of the occupied territory (<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000230116>).

²⁷⁰ The Minerva Center for German History (<https://koebner.huji.ac.il/>) and the Minerva Center for German-Jewish Literature and Cultural History (<https://rosenzweig.huji.ac.il/>).

²⁷¹ <https://aurdip.org/en/letter-from-aurdip-to-the-3616/>

²⁷² <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/hague-prot-1999/article-9>

use of, cultural property which is intended to conceal or destroy cultural, historical or scientific evidence.” are illegal under international law.

Minerva Center RIAB’s researchers and their connections to ELAD

Several researchers listed as members of the Minerva Center for the Relations between Israel and Aram in Biblical Times (RIAB)^{273,274,275} have been involved with archeological work linked to excavations funded, administered and exploited by Elad (or “Ir David Foundation”)²⁷⁶, a settler organization that promotes archeological and real estate activities in occupied territory. It operates archeological sites in the “City of David”^{277,278}, an illegal tourism site operated by Elad²⁷⁹ in the Palestinian neighbourhood of Silwan (East Jerusalem)^{280,281}, which led to the forced eviction of Palestinian residents²⁸². We found publications co-authored by RIAB members on objects from the excavation of the City of David^{283,284}, as well as from the Givati Parking Lot excavation^{285,286,287,288}. Both excavations are funded by Elad and are located in occupied Palestinian territory.

At least two confirmed RIAB members have contributed to research based on material recovered from ELAD-funded excavations at the Givati Parking Lot in Silwan, presented as part of the “City of David.” One RIAB member co-authored a study of Iron Age ivory panels from the site²⁸⁹. The publication explicitly states that the excavations were conducted on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority and Tel Aviv University and funded by Elad. A second RIAB member co-authored a scientific analysis of metal objects and slag recovered from the same excavation²⁹⁰.

In March 2026, the Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported on a planned eviction of approximately sixty families in Silwan, and sixty homes are expected to be demolished. The newspaper writes: “The justification for the eviction and demolition is Israel’s plan to establish a tourist archaeological park - “The King’s Garden” - part of the City of David National Park, managed by the Elad organization.”²⁹¹

²⁷³ <https://www.aramisrael.org/center-member>

²⁷⁴ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43855690> This paper’s co-author is Esther Eshel from RIAB. The abstract places the excavation on the lower eastern slope of the City of David, Jerusalem, which is in East Jerusalem. On page 167, a footnote notes that the paper’s co-author, Joe Uziel, directed the ELAD-funded excavations in East Jerusalem on which the paper is based.

²⁷⁵ <https://publications.iaa.org.il/atiqot/vol110/iss1/7>; <https://doi.org/10.70967/2948-040X.1082> The excavation discussed in the abstract refers to the west slope of the City of David hill, which lies in East Jerusalem.

²⁷⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ir_David_Foundation

²⁷⁷ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-middle-east-54237970>

²⁷⁸ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/CulturalRights/DestructionHeritage/NGOS/EmekShaveh.pdf>

²⁷⁹ <https://www.alhaq.org/publications/20869.html>

²⁸⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ir_David_Foundation

²⁸¹ <https://peacenow.org.il/en/settlement-under-the-guise-of-tourism-the-elad-settler-organization-in-silwan>

²⁸² <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/palestinian-family-evicted-from-its-home-in-east-jerusalem-ocha-article/>

²⁸³ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43855690>

²⁸⁴ <https://publications.iaa.org.il/atiqot/vol110/iss1/7>; <https://doi.org/10.70967/2948-040X.1082>

²⁸⁵ <https://cityofdavid.org.il/en/a-first-for-jerusalem-a-collection-of-decorated-ivories-were-unearthed-eng/>

²⁸⁶ <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/rare-collection-of-decorated-ivories-found-in-the-city-of-david-5-sep-2022>

²⁸⁷ <https://publications.iaa.org.il/atiqot/vol106/iss1/6>, <https://doi.org/10.70967/2948-040X.1871>

²⁸⁸ <https://publications.iaa.org.il/atiqot/vol106/iss1/26>; <https://doi.org/10.70967/2948-040X.1891>

²⁸⁹ https://publications.iaa.org.il/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1871&context=atiqot&utm_

²⁹⁰ <https://publications.iaa.org.il/atiqot/vol106/iss1/26/>

²⁹¹ <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/israel-politics/2026-03-26/ty-article/premium/15-palestinian-families-evicted-from-east-jerusalem-homes-transferred-to-settlers/0000019d-2922-d836-a1dd-b97adb710000>

Conference co-organised with the former director of the excavations of the City of David in annexed territories

The conference "Jerusalem through the Ages: New Perspectives"²⁹² was held at Schloss Beuggen (Rheinfelden, Germany) in April 2025. The conference was jointly organised by the Ingeborg Rennert Center of Jerusalem Studies, Bar-Ilan University and the Minerva Center for the Relations between Israel and Aram in Biblical Times. One of the organizers was Prof. Joe Uziel²⁹³. Between 2011 and 2019, Prof. Uziel worked for the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) as director of the excavations in the City of David and Wilson's Arch in the Western Wall of the City of David^{294,295}, in annexed East Jerusalem. Prof. Uziel also works as the head of the "Dead Sea Scrolls Unit" at the IAA²⁹⁶ that is responsible for the preservation and study of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The scrolls, found in excavation in the West Bank between 1947 and 1956, were seized by Israel during the six-day war in 1967^{297,298}, and have since been monitorized by Israel.

Workshops with archeological objects from occupied territories

The Minerva Center for the Relations between Israel and Aram in Biblical Times conducted a workshop²⁹⁹ with archaeological objects from Tel Burna, and acknowledged the director of the excavation, Prof. Itzik Shai from Ariel University. Prof. Shai was also an invited speaker at the conference "State Formation and Re-Urbanisation in the Iron Age Levant"^{300,301}, co-organised by RIAB.

4.3) Connections with Ariel University

Ariel University is located in the occupied West Bank and is directly involved in the annexation of territories for the expansion of its campus^{302,303}. Ariel University is an illegal institution according to Article 49(6) of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949)³⁰⁴, the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion (2004)³⁰⁵, and the UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016)³⁰⁶. Academic connections involving members of Ariel University and members of multiple Max Planck Institutes in Germany and of Minerva Centers exist in different forms.

Co-authored papers

Papers co-authored by members of the Max Planck Institute for Astronomy (Heidelberg), the Max Planck Institute for Solar System Research (Göttingen) and

²⁹² <https://www.aramisrael.org/post/jerusalem-through-the-ages-new-perspectives-conference-27-29-2025>

²⁹³ https://www.theol.uni-leipzig.de/fileadmin/Fakult%C3%A4t_Theologie/Dokumente/Institut_AT/Veranstaltungen/02_25_Post_er_Minerva.pdf

²⁹⁴ https://lisa.biu.ac.il/sites/lisa/files/shared/CV_J_Uziel.pdf

²⁹⁵ <https://web.archive.org/web/20250117191119/https://www.megalim.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/New-Studies-in-the-City-of-David.pdf>

²⁹⁶ <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/archaeology-today/preserving-the-dead-sea-scrolls/>

²⁹⁷ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/german-government-refuses-to-certify-dead-sea-scrolls-belong-to-israel/>

²⁹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead_Sea_Scrolls

²⁹⁹ <https://www.aramisrael.org/post/workshop-on-ancient-masks-april-25th-2018>

³⁰⁰ https://www.iaw.unibe.ch/unibe/portal/fak_historisch/dga/iaw/content/e39448/e39449/e962952/files1594110/RIABSwissconference-Tentativeschedule-1_ger.pdf

³⁰¹ <https://www.aramisrael.org/post/meeting-on-state-formation-and-re-urbanisation-in-the-iron-age-levant>

³⁰² <https://www.timesofisrael.com/adelson-to-donate-20-million-to-expand-west-bank-university/>

³⁰³ <https://campuscore.ariel.ac.il/wp/university-friends/wp-content/uploads/sites/27/2018/11/Ariel-University-Projects-Engl-ish-version-147.pdf>

³⁰⁴ <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/article-49>

³⁰⁵ <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/131/131-20040709-ADV-01-00-EN.pdf>

³⁰⁶ <https://www.un.org/webcast/pdfs/SRES2334-2016.pdf>

the Max Planck Institute for Gravitational Physics (Hannover) and by members of Ariel University were found³⁰⁷, mostly related to international projects such as the CARMENES survey³⁰⁸, LIGO-Virgo-KAGRA Collaboration³⁰⁹. Further publications were co-authored by members of Ariel and by members of the Max Planck Institute for Polymer Research (Mainz), the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics (Nijmegen), the Max Planck Institute for Human Development (Berlin), the Max Planck Institute of Colloids and Interfaces (Potsdam) and the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology (Leipzig)³¹⁰. Furthermore, researchers from the Minerva Center for the Relations between Israel and Aram in Biblical Times (including its director) co-authored papers with researchers from Ariel University^{311,312,313}.

Conferences, seminars and workshops

We identified conferences, seminars, and workshops involving researchers affiliated with both Ariel University and institutes and centers of the Max Planck Society. These include events that were co-organized, co-funded, or attended by researchers from both institutions. Some examples include the following:

- The “First DIP Conference on Holography and the Swamp Land” was held at the Ben-Gurion University in March 2023 and was organized by the DIP-Collaboration³¹⁴ between the Max Planck Institute of Physics (Munich), Hamburg University, Würzburg University, the Weizmann Institute and the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. The conference hosted six participants from Ariel University³¹⁵.
- A seminar hosted at the Max Planck Institute for Solid State Research in Stuttgart³¹⁶, that included an invited speaker from Ariel University.
- The international workshop “Archaeology Life Science and Environment” was held at Ariel University in June 2017. The workshop had contributions from members of the Max Planck Weizmann Center for Integrative Archaeology and Anthropology. The Center, closed in 2018, was an interdisciplinary cooperation between the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, and the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot^{317,318}.
- A talk by the chair of Ariel University's *Center for the research and study of genocide* was given at a conference organized by the Minerva Center for Human Rights in December 2024^{319,320}.

³⁰⁷ See e.g. <https://doi.org/10.1051/0004-6361/202450836>, <https://doi.org/10.1051/0004-6361/202554992>, <https://doi.org/10.1103/kw5g-d732>

³⁰⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CARMENES_survey

³⁰⁹ <https://www.ligo.caltech.edu/page/ligo-scientific-collaboration>

³¹⁰ See e.g. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00396-012-2855-z>; <https://doi.org/10.1002/sml.202006875>; <https://doi.org/10.1080/00758914.2017.1279495>; <https://doi.org/10.1038/s42003-023-04633-4>; <https://doi.org/10.5334/joc.231>; <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnins.2022.970878> ;

³¹¹ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328692078_Resassessing_the_Character_of_the_Judahite_Centralized_Kingdom_A_n_Updated_Archaeological_View_In_Hebrew_with_English_abstract

³¹² <https://journals.librarypublishing.arizona.edu/jaei/article/id/1182/>

³¹³ <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.5615/neareastarch.81.1.0028>

³¹⁴ <https://sites.physics.bgu.ac.il/holographyswampland/>

³¹⁵ <https://sites.physics.bgu.ac.il/holographyswampland/conferencebgu/>

³¹⁶ https://www.fkf.mpg.de/7941126/29_Seminars-2023

³¹⁷ <https://www.eva.mpg.de/mpwc/index/>

³¹⁸ <https://telburna.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/abstracts-booklet-june-14-15.pdf>

³¹⁹ https://en.minervacenter.huji.ac.il/sites/default/files/minervacenteren/files/cfp_2024_hopelessness_to_hopefulness.pdf

³²⁰ https://en.minervacenter.huji.ac.il/sites/default/files/minervacenteren/files/tknyh_lkns-01_1.jpg

- The Minerva Center for the Relations between Israel and Aram in Biblical Times conducted a workshop³²¹ with archaeological objects from Tel Burna, and acknowledged the director of the excavation, Prof. Itzik Shai from Ariel University. Prof. Shai was also an invited speaker at the conference “State Formation and Re-Urbanisation in the Iron Age Levant”^{322,323}, co-organised by RIAB.
- The “20th Israel Materials Engineering Conference” (IMEC20)³²⁴ was held in Jerusalem in February 2025. Ariel University was one of the sponsors of the conference³²⁵, along with RAFAEL and MAFAT. The organising Committee³²⁶ had members from Ariel, the Nuclear Research Center of the Negev, and RAFAEL. Four researchers of the Max Planck Society, from the Max Planck Institute for Sustainable Materials (Düsseldorf), the Max Planck Institute for Intelligent Systems (Stuttgart), and from the Max Planck Institute for Chemical Physics of Solids (Dresden), participated in the conference^{327,328,329}.

³²¹ <https://www.aramisrael.org/post/workshop-on-ancient-masks-april-25th-2018>

³²² <https://gath.wordpress.com/2024/11/20/meeting-on-state-formation-and-re-urbanisation-in-the-iron-age-levant/>

³²³ <https://www.aramisrael.org/post/meeting-on-state-formation-and-re-urbanisation-in-the-iron-age-levant>

³²⁴ <https://imec25.org/>

³²⁵ <https://imec25.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/IMEC20-book-1.pdf>

³²⁶ <https://imec25.org/ipp50-committees/>

³²⁷ <https://program.eventact.com/Agenda/Program>

³²⁸ <https://imec25.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/IMEC20-book-1.pdf>

³²⁹ <https://imec25.org/plenary-invited-speakers/>

Conclusions and demands

This report exposes a network of institutional and financial ties between the Max Planck Society and Israeli entities directly implicated in ongoing violations of international law. These include actors embedded in the Israeli military-industrial complex. Furthermore, connections were found also with institutions and organizations operating within occupied and annexed territories. Such connections are not abstract or incidental, they are part of a material infrastructure that sustains and normalizes occupation, apartheid, and the systematic dispossession of Palestinians.

The evidence presented goes beyond raising general concerns. It demonstrates that specific forms of collaboration risk contributing to the normalization or legitimization of practices that violate fundamental principles of international law and human rights.

In particular, this report uncovers extensive links between the Max Planck Society's Minerva Centers and the Israeli military-industrial apparatus. These include shared funding schemes, joint publications, co-developed research infrastructures, and jointly organized conferences. It further reveals that a Minerva-affiliated director patented technology later sold to the Israeli military and used in the surveillance of Palestinians, raising concerns about the possible downstream use of academic research in surveillance technologies and general concerns about them being used as a tool of control in the context of illegal dispossession and state-authorized killing. The documented presence of Israel's Directorate of Defense Research and Development (MAFAT) within academic activities tied to the Minerva Centers underscores the depth of this entanglement.

The report also shows that connections exist between the MPS and entities operating in occupied and annexed territories, including Ariel University, located in an illegal settlement. In parallel, some public interventions by institutionally affiliated figures raise concerns because they weaken protection for Palestinian civilians or frame Israeli military violence in ways that rhetorically minimize civilian harm — contributing to an intellectual climate in which such grave violence is normalized.

These collaborations cannot be understood solely as neutral academic exchanges. Continuing such collaborations means maintaining active partnerships with institutions that are embedded in and benefit from systems of oppression. This stands in direct contradiction to the Max Planck Society's stated commitment to ethical research and human rights.

Defenders of these partnerships often invoke the supposed independence and critical nature of Israeli academia. However, the evidence presented in this report and in a growing body of scholarship demonstrates that significant parts of Israeli academic institutions are structurally intertwined with state policies and practices targeting Palestinians. Invoking "academic freedom" in this context risks obscuring, rather than confronting, these realities.

There is a fundamental difference between supporting individual scholars and

endorsing institutions that are deeply implicated in state violence. Failing to make this distinction allows serious questions of institutional responsibility to remain unaddressed under the guise of neutrality.

After decades of documented dispossession, and in the context of ongoing large-scale violence, the continuation of these collaborations cannot be framed as apolitical^{330,331}. It constitutes a political and ethical choice: one that risks aligning scientific cooperation with systems of domination rather than principles of justice.

We deplore the fact that the MPS did not itself initiate a review of its institutional collaboration with Israeli academic institutions, which should have been the case, the latest, the moment it had learned about a “risk of genocide” (ICJ Bosnia vs. Serbia, ICJ South Africa v Israel, January 2024).

In light of these findings, the report calls on the Max Planck Society to undertake an immediate and transparent review of its collaborations with Israeli institutions identified in this report, particularly those linked to the military sector, activities in occupied territories, or practices raising concerns under international law. It further calls for the adoption of strong human rights due diligence mechanisms to ensure that research cooperation remains consistent with international law and the Max Planck Society’s own ethical principles.

The report also emphasizes the responsibility of researchers, staff members, and affiliated scholars within the Max Planck Society to critically engage with and challenge institutional partnerships that may contribute to or legitimize violations of international law and human rights. Open internal debate, transparency, and institutional accountability are essential to ensuring that scientific cooperation does not become detached from its broader ethical and political implications.

We finally call on the Max Planck Society to make use of its institutional resources and international standing to support Palestinian academic institutions and scholars in Gaza, where the higher education sector has suffered extensive destruction and disruption, and in the occupied Palestinian territory more broadly, where academic life continues to face significant structural pressures and constraints.

In this context, Palestinian academics and students are in urgent need of sustained academic support, institutional partnerships, research opportunities, and international collaborations. We therefore encourage the Max Planck Society, consistent with its publicly stated commitments to scientific exchange, international cooperation, and the role of research and education in fostering dialogue, to expand and develop meaningful and sustainable forms of collaboration with Palestinian academic institutions and researchers, and to contribute to the strengthening of scientific and educational connections with Palestine.

³³⁰ As stated, considering the historical context, also by historian of the Max Planck Society in: https://pure.mpg.de/rest/items/item_2426617_19/component/file_2465371/content

³³¹ <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/about-us/minerva-stiftung/history>

Appendix: The Minerva Center for Micro Turbine Powered Energy Systems (MTPES) at Technion

“The Advanced Defense Research Institute (ADRI) at the Technion: Making academic research applicable for the IDF

The ADRI (also referred to as “Peter Munk”, part of Technion’s Center for Security Science and Technology), directed by Brigadier General (Res.) Jacob Nagel^{332,333}, is acknowledged as a funding party on MTPES’s website, in the CV of the MTPES Director, Prof. Cukurel, and in papers³³⁴ published by MTPES members and co-funded by the Minerva Foundation (see Section 3.1). The main objective of the Institute, as written on its website, is to cater to the interests of Israel’s defense needs³³⁵:

“The aim is to collaborate with industrial defense companies and government agencies **to meet the security and defense force’s needs of Israel** in the medium to long-range horizons. (...) Areas of interest (examples): Protection, Robotics, Decontamination, Cyber, Data Science, Micro-Satellites and payloads, Miniaturizing electronics, Optics; Image processing, Communication, Image Analysis (facial recognition, video), Advanced Energy Sources (Fuel Cells), Drones, Lasers, Etc”.

In March 2025, ADRI’s director, Brigadier General (Res.) Jacob Nagel, stated³³⁶:

“(…) one of my roles at the Technion is to bridge the gap between academia and the defense industry and defense forces. (...) My center [the Advanced Defense Research Institute] helps connect these dots. **During the war, we rapidly turned academic concepts into operational solutions for the battlefield**, demonstrating the power of collaboration between academia and the military. This includes advancements in swarm drone technology, cyber defense, and battlefield robotics.”

In September 2024, Prof. Cukurel, MTPES director, participated in a conference organized by ADRI and titled “Security And the War on Terror: The Scientific Challenge”^{337,338}. The conference was attended by members of MAFAT, IDF, and RAFAEL³³⁹. The title of his contribution to the conference was: “UMGT – ULTRA MICRO GAS TURBINE POWERED ENERGY SYSTEM”. Research on the same topic (UMGTs) was published by Prof. Cukurel in October 2024 in two papers³⁴⁰ that acknowledge both the Max Planck Society and ADRI (‘Peter Munk, Center for Security, Science and Technology’) in its “Funding Data” section. As stated in the papers’ abstract,³⁴¹ UMGTs are relevant for drones.

³³² <https://adri.technion.ac.il/>

³³³ <https://ats.org/our-impact/an-update-on-defense-and-security-tech/>

³³⁴ <https://doi.org/10.1115/1.4064825>; <https://doi.org/10.1115/1.4064826>; <https://doi.org/10.1115/1.4063421>;

³³⁵ <https://adri.technion.ac.il/demonstrator-projects/>

³³⁶ <https://ats.org/our-impact/the-nagel-committee-report/>

³³⁷ <https://adri.technion.ac.il/conferences/>

³³⁸ <https://adri.technion.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/%D7%AA%D7%95%D7%9B%D7%A0%D7%99%D7%AA-%D7%9B%D7%A0%D7%A1-%D7%91%D7%99%D7%98%D7%97%D7%95%D7%9F-%D7%95%D7%9E%D7%9C%D7%97%D7%9E%D7%9424-.pdf>

³³⁹ <https://adri.technion.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/%D7%AA%D7%95%D7%9B%D7%A0%D7%99%D7%AA-%D7%9B%D7%A0%D7%A1-%D7%91%D7%99%D7%98%D7%97%D7%95%D7%9F-%D7%95%D7%9E%D7%9C%D7%97%D7%9E%D7%9424-.pdf>

³⁴⁰ <https://doi.org/10.1115/1.4064825>; <https://doi.org/10.1115/1.4064826>

³⁴¹ *ibid.*

ADRI's director, Brigadier General (Res.) Jacob Nagel, further stated³⁴²:

“Our [Technion's] expertise in aerospace engineering is unique and critical to the development of next-generation UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicles], hypersonic missiles, and directed-energy weapons, and the new Center for High-Speed Flight will contribute to advancements in capabilities, autonomous systems, and advanced propulsion technologies. The research conducted here lays the foundation for future aerial combat and surveillance capabilities. Additionally, the Technion is working on AI-driven decision-making, quantum computing, and space technologies — all of which will define the future of warfare.”

Prof. Beni Cukurel is part of the research team of Technion's Center for High-Speed Flight³⁴³ mentioned here by Prof. Nagel.



Figure 5) Prof. Nagel, Benjamin Netanyahu and Israel Katz at the presentation of the 'Nagel Committee Report'

Prof. Nagel also served as Netanyahu's National Security Advisor between 2016 and 2017³⁴⁴. In January 2025, he presented the 130-page *Nagel Committee Report*^{345,346} to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (Figure 5³⁴⁷, Prof. Nigel is next to Benjamin Netanyahu). The document contains recommendations for Israel's security strategy and budget for the next decade, also regarding Gaza³⁴⁸:

“(...)Gaza still harbors thousands of terrorists and eradicating them will take years. The shift in our strategy is that we will no longer wait for threats to materialize — we will act preemptively.”

The AIJES Conference

The "Israel Symposium on Jet Engines & Gas Turbines" is well-connected to MTPES's director, Prof. Beni Cukurel, and to the Turbomachinery and Heat Transfer Laboratory in which MTPES operates. The conference's organising committee is composed of Beni Cukurel and members of the Israeli Ministry of Defence, of the Israel Air Force and of RAFAEL³⁴⁹. The sponsors of the 18th AIJES (2019) include the MPS-Minerva Stiftung, RAFAEL, IAI, Bet Shemens Engines, the Israeli Air Force and MAFAT^{350,351} (Figure 6). Pictures from the conference are available together with

³⁴² <https://ats.org/our-impact/the-nagel-committee-report/>

³⁴³ <https://hypersonics.technion.ac.il>

³⁴⁴ <https://www.fdd.org/team/jacob-nagel/>

³⁴⁵ <https://ats.org/our-impact/the-nagel-committee-report/>

³⁴⁶ <https://online.fliphtml5.com/lymuw/swdc/#p=1>

³⁴⁷ <https://ats.org/our-impact/the-nagel-committee-report/>

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ <https://aijes.net.technion.ac.il/organizing-committee/>

³⁵⁰ <https://aijes.net.technion.ac.il/files/2020/10/BOOK-OF-ABSTRACT-AIJES-18th.pdf>

³⁵¹ <https://aijes.net.technion.ac.il/sponsors/>

pictures from the ceremony of the opening of the renovated buildings of the Turbomachinery and Heat Transfer Laboratory^{352,353}. They show Beni Cukurel during the AIJES conference together with Major Yigal Ben-Shabat, head of the Propulsion Systems Branch of the Aeronautical Division of Israel's Ministry of Defense, and Beni Cukurel showing the Capstone C65 ICPH Microturbine to the public during the ceremony (Figure 7).

	טכניון, מכון טכנולוגי לישראל
	מפא"ת
	חיל האוויר
	תעשייה אווירית
	רפא"ל
	מנועי בית שמש
	Max-Planck-Society Minerva Stiftung
	לפרסום הכנס: האגודה למדעי התעופה והחלל בישראל וללשכת המהנדסים



Figure 6) Sponsors of the 18th AIJES as presented in the book of abstracts of the conference³⁵⁴ (left), and on the conference website³⁵⁵ (right). The Max Planck Society's Minerva Stiftung is listed together with MAFAT, IAI, RAFAEL, Israel Air Force and Bet Shemesh Engines. The Max Planck Society logo appears next to the Israel Air Force logo as "Gold Sponsors".



Figure 7) Left: Beni Cukurel during the AIJES conferences together with Major Yigal Ben-Shabat, head of the Propulsion Systems Branch of the Aeronautical Division of Israel's Ministry of Defense. Right: Beni Cukurel showing the Capstone C65 ICPH Microturbine to the public during the ceremony of the opening of the renovated buildings of the Turbomachinery and Heat Transfer Laboratory^{356,357}.

³⁵² <https://aijes.net.technion.ac.il/gallery/>

³⁵³ <https://photos.app.goo.gl/gAKxZeHnrAM6FChv7>

³⁵⁴ <https://aijes.net.technion.ac.il/files/2020/10/BOOK-OF-ABSTRACT-AIJES-18th.pdf>

³⁵⁵ <https://aijes.net.technion.ac.il/sponsors/>

³⁵⁶ <https://aijes.net.technion.ac.il/gallery/>

³⁵⁷ <https://photos.app.goo.gl/gAKxZeHnrAM6FChv7>

The Zirmey Silon Educational Project and the Capstone C65 Microturbine

The Zirmey Silon Project³⁵⁸, headed by Prof. Cukurel, operates within the Turbomachinery and Heat Transfer Laboratory with the vision of “Enhancing educational initiatives in cooperation with industry leaders and the IDF”. The project is carried in collaboration with RAFAEL, Bet Shemesh Engines, MAFAT, and the Israeli Air Force. Research projects listed on the Zirmey Silon Project website

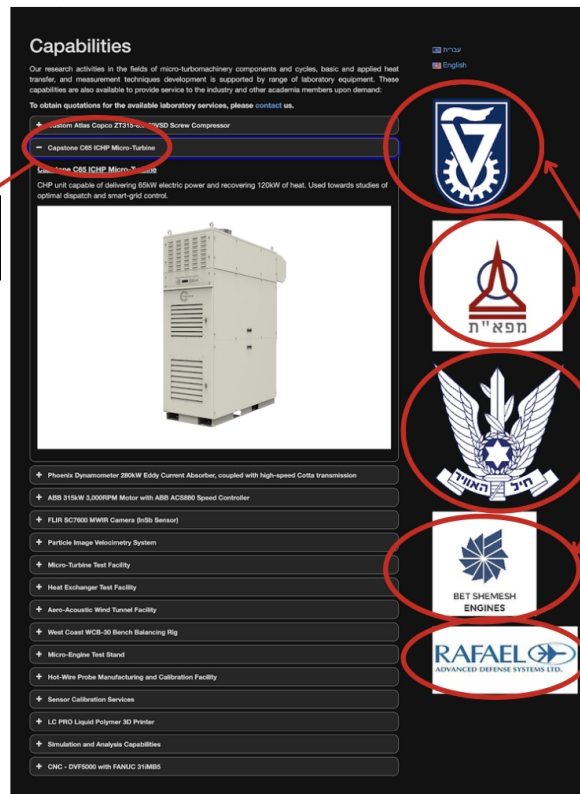
include applications for unmanned aerial vehicles (drones), like the “Aeolus – Autonomous Jet-Powered UAV”^{359,360} carried out “in full collaboration with MAFAT & Rafael.” (see also Paragraph 3.1).



Figure 8: Screenshot of the Zirmey Silon Project's “capabilities” webpage³⁶¹.

The Zirmey Silon Project's website lists the Capstone C65 ICPH Microturbine among its “capabilities”³⁶² (Figure 9). The same microturbine appears on the Max Planck Society's website³⁶³ and in the virtual tour of the Turbomachinery and Heat Transfer Laboratory³⁶⁴ with the logo of the Max Planck Society displayed on it (Figure 10).

Capstone C65 ICPH
Micro-Turbine



Israeli
weapons
companies/
MAFAT/
Israeli
Air Force

Figure 9: The Capstone C65 Microturbine is listed on the Zirmey Silon Project's website.

³⁵⁸ <https://zirmey-silon.technion.ac.il/>

³⁵⁹ <https://zirmey-silon.technion.ac.il/uav-senior-design-7-8-project/>

³⁶⁰ <https://zirmey-silon.technion.ac.il/sponsored-research-projects/uav-senior-design-7-8-project-2019-2020/>

³⁶¹ <https://zirmey-silon.technion.ac.il/facilities-and-capabilities/>

³⁶² <https://zirmey-silon.technion.ac.il/facilities-and-capabilities/>

³⁶³ <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/centers/list/minerva-center-for-micro-turbine-powered-energy-systems>

³⁶⁴ <https://app.lapentor.com/sphere/turbomachinery-and-heat-transfer-lab>

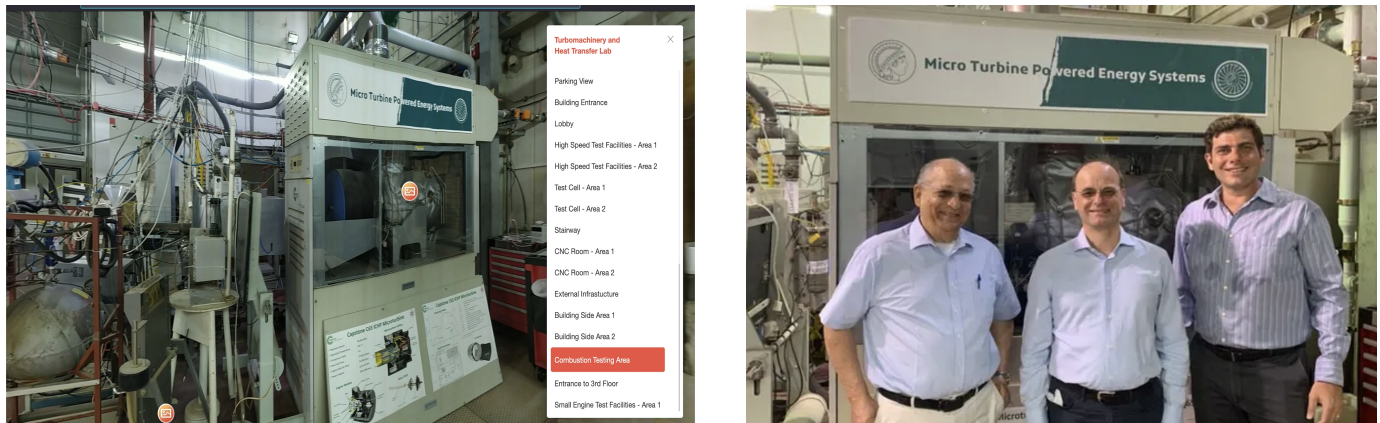


Figure 10) Left: The Capstone Microturbine is visible in the “Virtual Lab Tour” of the Turbomachinery and Heat Transfer Lab, in the “Combustion Testing Area” room³⁶⁵. The Max Planck’s MTPES logo is displayed on it. Right: Screenshot of the Minerva Stiftung’s website on MTPES³⁶⁶. The image description reads: “Impressions of Prof. Ulman Lindenberger, Scientific Managing Director of the Minerva Stiftung, visiting the Micro Turbine Lab during their evaluation in June 2021.” The Capstone Microturbine is visible with the Max Planck’s MTPES logo displayed on it.

MTPES and its connections with the military-industrial complex

Below is a schematic representation of the connections between the Minerva Center MTPES and the Israeli military-industrial complex (see Figure 11). The MTPES is part of Technion’s aerospace department and functions within Technion’s Turbomachinery and Heat Transfer Laboratory. The MTPES is co-financed by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research through the Minerva Foundation, a subsidiary of the Max Planck Society. The MTPES also receives grants and funds from the US Army, Israeli Aerospace Industries, and from Technion’s ADRI (‘Peter Munk’ Advanced Defense Research Institute – Center for Security, Science and Technology). The Turbomachinery and Heat Transfer Laboratory, within which the MTPES is embedded, receives funds from RAFAEL, IAI, Bet Shemesh Engines, MAFAT, and the Israel Air Force. Part of the Turbomachinery and Heat Transfer Laboratory is also the Zirmey Silon Educational Project, which shares machinery with the MTPES. The MTPES, the Turbomachinery and Heat Transfer Laboratory, and the Zirmey Project are all headed by Prof. Beni Cukurel. The knowledge produced at the MTPES is presented in papers co-authored with members of RAFAEL and of the US Army, and co-funded by the Minerva Foundation and by military-related institutes like Technion’s ADRI³⁶⁷. This knowledge is also amplified through conferences co-organized by MTPES’s director, Prof. Cukurel, and by members of the MAFAT, and co-funded by the Max Planck Society’s Minerva Foundation and the Israeli military-industrial complex. See Section 3.1 for references.

³⁶⁵ <https://app.lapentor.com/sphere/turbomachinery-and-heat-transfer-lab>

³⁶⁶ <https://www.minerva.mpg.de/centers/list/minerva-center-for-micro-turbine-powered-energy-systems>

³⁶⁷ See e.g.: <https://doi.org/10.1115/1.4064825>; <https://doi.org/10.1115/1.4064826>; <https://doi.org/10.1115/1.4063923>; <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijheatmasstransfer.2025.127642>; <https://doi.org/10.1115/1.4063421>;

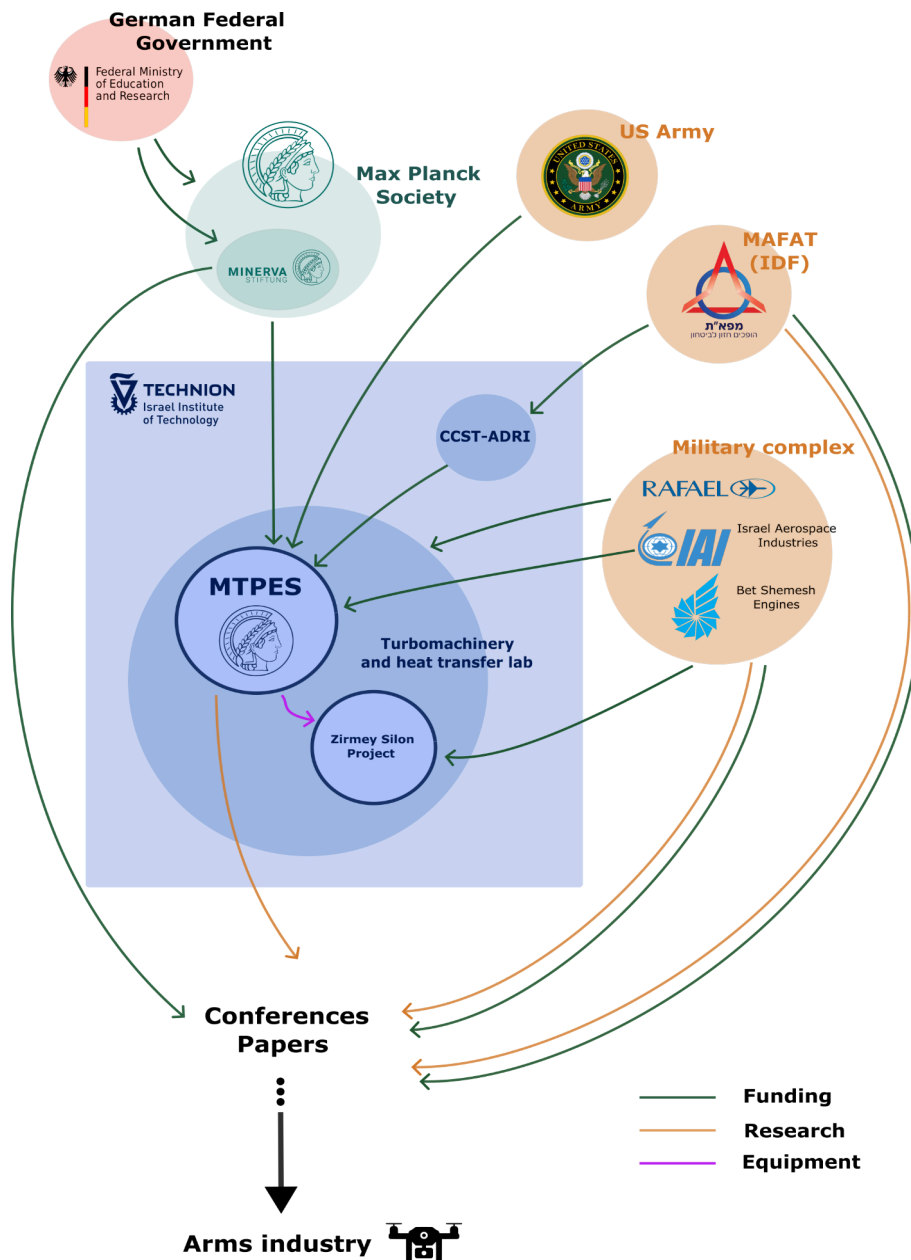


Figure 11) Schematic representation of the connections between the MTPES and the military-industrial complex.

Call for students in collaboration with the military-industrial complex

TURBOMACHINERY & HEAT TRANSFER LABORATORY

ARE YOU AN AMBITIOUS, YOUNG SCIENTIST?
 ARE YOU WILLING TO LEARN MULTI-DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH?
 DO YOU LIKE TO BE A PART OF ESTABLISHING SOMETHING NEW?
 DO YOU HAVE A B.SC. GRADE AVERAGE > 85?

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN WORKING WITH:

RAFAEL IAI BET SHEMESH ENGINES LTD.

THEN, WE WANT YOU.

LOOKING FOR B.SC. / M.SC. / PH.D. STUDENTS INTERESTED IN:

- Performance Assessment and Enhancement of Micro Turbines
- Thermal Management and Heat Transfer Augmentation
- Novel Measurement Technique Development

WANT TO WORK WITH A YOUNG, ENTHUSIASTIC FACULTY MEMBER WHO OFFERS YOU BROAD FUTURE POSSIBILITIES?
 CONTACT: DR. BENI CUKUREL | <http://bcukurel.net.technion.ac.il> | bcukurel@technion.ac.il

RAFAEL, Bet Shemesh Engines Ltd., and IAI are present in the call for new students for the Turbomachinery and Heat Transfer Laboratory shown on the Zirmey Silon Educational Project's website³⁶⁸. Dr. Beni Cukurel, MTPES's director, is the contact person (Figure 12).

Figure 12) Turbomachinery and Heat Transfer Laboratory's announcement of "open positions" for new students³⁶⁹.

³⁶⁸ <https://zirmey-silon.technion.ac.il/positions/>

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

