

**Urgent appeal to the leaders of the European Union and the Member States to immediately  
suspend the Association Agreement between Israel and the European Union**

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To the President of the European Council  
To the President of the European Commission  
To the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy  
To the Prime Ministers of all EU Member States  
To the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of all EU Member States

Your Excellencies,

On May 20, the European Foreign Affairs Council convened to discuss whether Israel still complies with the conditions of Article 2 of the Association Agreement with the European Union. More than twenty years ago, Article 2 was included in the Association Agreement to place values such as human rights, democracy, and the rule of law at the center of the EU's foreign policy. As Belgian universities we welcome that there is at least a strong majority in favour of reviewing Israel's compliance with Article 2. High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Kaja Kallas, concluded: "So we will launch this exercise and, in the meantime, it is up to Israel to unblock the humanitarian aid. Saving lives must be our top priority".

One month later the Association Agreement is still in force. As Belgian universities we reiterate our appeal for immediate action. Article 2 is not a technical clause, but a fundamental principle: respect for human rights and democratic principles is the foundation on which cooperation with third countries rests. If this foundation is systematically violated, it must have consequences. Otherwise, our European treaties risk becoming hollow words.

For months, Israel has been conducting a devastating military offensive in Gaza. The images and numbers speak for themselves: tens of thousands of civilian casualties, systematic destruction of civilian infrastructure, blockades on humanitarian aid, and a growing famine. Meanwhile, repression in the occupied West Bank continues unabated: home demolitions, arbitrary arrests, violent settler attacks, and the expansion of illegal settlements. Various reports from the United Nations and human rights organizations have extensively and unequivocally documented these violations. The International Court of Justice previously ruled that Israel must take all measures to protect Palestinians in the Gaza Strip from the risk of genocide by ensuring adequate basic services and humanitarian aid.

Despite these violations, Europe still recognizes Israel as a full partner under the bilateral Association Agreement. As universities we are increasingly confronted with this contradiction. This means, among other things, that Israeli academic institutions — even those that are part or partners of the Israeli state and military apparatus — can participate in the large-scale European research and innovation program Horizon Europe. Participating organizations are expected, under Article 14 of the model agreement, to act in accordance with the "highest ethical standards" and the fundamental values of the EU: respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and human rights. In theory, this is clear. In practice, it is problematic.

In response to the atrocities in the occupied Palestinian territories, Belgian universities have repeatedly asked the European Commission to provide a transparent and effective ethical screening framework. Such a framework would make it possible to assess whether the content of research projects poses a risk of human rights violations, and whether the (intended) project partners are complicit in such

violations. To this day, however, the Commission's response remains limited to a minimalist reading of Article 14: potential structural unethical behavior of a partner institution is ignored, with only the risks inherent to the content of the project being examined. We urgently appeal to the Commission to take swift action.

Belgian universities are heavily investing in ethical screening, but they lack the leverage to translate the conclusions into concrete action. Unilateral withdrawal from consortia or — if necessary — excluding Israeli partners from approved projects leads to legal uncertainty, potential compensation claims, and reputational damage. Without a clear European framework, it is nearly impossible to legally justify morally responsible choices.

In the current situation, which continues to escalate dramatically, we call on the European Union and on the Member States to suspend the Association Agreement with Israel. Suspending the agreement is not an extreme demand. And let us be clear: we do not question Israel's right to defend itself; what we do denounce is that this results in dehumanizing horror and such far-reaching violations of human rights. It is the logical consequence of the treaty's own provisions. Article 2 states that cooperation is "essentially based" on respect for human rights. If that condition is systematically violated by the association partner, then suspension is not only politically necessary, but also legally justified.

We urge the European Commission and the Member States to suspend the Association Agreement without any further delay. Additionally, we request that the European Commission starts to develop a transparent, structural, and independent human rights framework for evaluating all international partnerships under Horizon Europe and other European programs. Belgian universities are prepared to share their experiences and to constructively contribute to solutions. But that requires clear political choices.

The European Union can only maintain its moral authority if it is willing to take its own values seriously — even when this may be uncomfortable. Holding Israel accountable for ongoing human rights violations is not an ideological stance, but a moral and legal necessity.

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If you would like to join our appeal to suspend the Association Agreement between the European Union and Israel, please consider:

- [Endorsing the statement on behalf of your institution](#) or encourage your institution to endorse the statement.
- Sharing the statement with your networks to raise awareness.
- Engaging with national and regional policymakers to reinforce the importance of an urgent suspension.