



Safety, Power, and Responsibility: Navigating Palestinian-Jewish Realities on Campus

An immersive learning day for academic staff at the School for Peace

Summary Report

Topic: Jewish-Palestinian relations in academic campuses

Date: July 21, 2025

Location: The School for Peace, Wahat al-Salam – Neve Shalom

Executive Summary

The immersive learning day held on July 21, 2025, at the School for Peace addressed the question of Jewish-Palestinian partnership in academia during times of conflict. It brought together 19 academic and administrative staff from 11 institutions. The day combined theoretical learning and in-depth dialogue, engaging with issues of safety, belonging, political identity, and institutional structure.

Participants experienced the event as meaningful on emotional, professional, and political levels. The recommendations developed during the day call for further cultivation of such spaces, shifting from inclusion to active partnership. The day fostered hope, sharpened awareness of gaps, and connected participants around a shared moral and professional responsibility to drive change in Israeli academia.

1. Context

In recent years, changes in the funding and governance of diversity and inclusion in academia have shifted responsibility to administrative bodies and introduced quantitative performance indicators. These processes impact the nature of educational work on campuses, taking place alongside deepening complexities in Palestinian-Jewish relations within higher education—among students, faculty, and administration alike.

The day brought together 19 academic and administrative staff—12 Jewish and 7 Palestinian—from 11 institutions: Sapir College, Kaye College, Achva College, Yezreel Valley College, University of Haifa, Hebrew University, David Yellin College, Beit Berl College, Weizmann Institute, Levinsky-Wingate Academic Center, and Ruppin Academic Center.

The aim was not only to discuss representation, diversity, or inclusion, but to **ask a deeper question: What kind of Jewish-Palestinian partnership is possible today within the academic sphere, and what personal, institutional, and political transformations are needed to make it possible?**

This approach requires expanding the boundaries of institutional imagination—not merely managing conflict, but acknowledging it, engaging with it, and transforming campuses from “neutral” spaces into spaces that invite action, critique, and responsibility.



This vision aligns with the spirit of Prof. Tamar Haggar’s policy paper for Qadaya (July 2025), which frames academia as a unique educational arena for fostering courageous dialogue precisely in times of crisis. The paper critiques the dominant institutional approach—seeking to regulate dialogue through rigid rules on what can and cannot be said, such as the “traffic light method”—and instead proposes an open space that allows authentic conversation on painful, unresolved issues.

2. Target Audience

Academic and administrative staff engaged in diversity, inclusion, and Palestinian- Jewish relations on campus—such as diversity coordinators, student deans, lecturers, and educators involved in dialogue processes.

3. Guiding Principles

- Combining theoretical learning with experiential group work
- Working in both uni-national and bi-national groups
- Focusing on the political reality and its impact on academia
- Exposure to models for addressing inter-identity complexities

4. Main Sessions

4.1 Guest Lecture – Prof. Teresa Koloma Beck

Prof. Teresa Koloma Beck, a sociologist from Helmut Schmidt University in Hamburg, Germany presented a comparative study on how the events of October 7 and their aftermath impacted the sense of safety on campuses in Germany and Israel. She identified two conceptions of safety in academia:

- *Safety as routine*: stability, quiet, absence of disruption to the daily order.
- *Safety as self-expression*: a space where one can speak, ask questions, and express identity—even at the cost of discomfort.

Prof. Koloma Beck argued that prioritizing routine can suppress the voices of marginalized groups. She stressed that **institutional policies seeking “balance” or “neutrality” can perpetuate existing inequalities. Her conclusion: care-based policies should be prioritized over control-based policies.**

The discussion explored how campus practices intersect with academia’s role during crises: Does academia have a moral role? A political one? How can it enable (or block) expressions of pain, resistance, and hope?



4.2 Discussion – “Gaza in Hebrew” Initiative

The “Gaza in Hebrew” initiative—a series of public meetings at the Hebrew University initiated by students and faculty to make the human cost of the war visible on campus—was presented.

The initiative sparked deep discussion on academia’s role in times of crisis: Should it remain silent? Respond? Enable expressions of pain and hope?

4.3 Dialogue Groups – Processing Questions of Identity and Partnership

In uni-national groups:

- Palestinian participants described feelings of pain, anger, despair, alienation from the academia, fear of political expression, and a dilemma between their Palestinian identity and conscience—which call for protest—and their formal role, which demands state-like restraint or at least “quiet compliance.” They shared the sense that “the institution invites our participation but does not truly give us a safe space.”
- Jewish participants expressed confusion, a desire to understand, and internal conflict between family loyalty (e.g., as parents of soldiers) and a moral obligation to engage in critical discourse.

In bi-national groups:

- There were moments of connection through authentic sharing, but also tensions around hierarchy, language, and representation.
- A central question arose: **Can political partnership be built within a space where the identities themselves are in conflict? What is required to transform inter-identity dialogue into genuine partnership?**
- A positive emotional impact was noted from the presence of Arabic-speaking religious Jewish participants, which some Palestinian participants found both comforting and surprising.

The groups reflected existing gaps but also demonstrated the potential for mutual understanding and hope—through encounters that seek not unity, but mutual recognition. The day was experienced not only as a professional meeting, but as a profound identity experience.

5. Recommendations

- Advance in-depth programs for Jewish–Palestinian partnership in academia
- Develop training for academic and administrative staff to engage with political conflict
- Create cross-institutional courses on identity, belonging, and dialogue
- Strengthen public academic discourse through community-based initiatives
- Encourage institutional policies of care and responsibility instead of quiet conflict management



6. Conclusion

The learning day on July 21, 2025, was a rare and necessary attempt to create an inter-identity academic space where Jews and Palestinians can remain together—not out of agreement, but out of a commitment to careful partnership in conditions of conflict. Rather than relying on institutional definitions of “diversity” or “neutrality,” participants confronted the question: What does academic partnership mean in times of conflict?

The day created a space where reality could be faced—without falling apart. It offered the possibility to recognize that political dialogue is not a contradiction to academia, but a condition for its educational and moral existence.

Key insights emerged:

- Inclusion is insufficient when one side must shrink to be accepted.
- Partnership requires mutual transformation, not just flexibility.
- Especially in times of institutional silence, the responsibility for authentic dialogue falls on individuals, groups, and civil society.

Participant feedback:

Post-event feedback indicated that for many participants, the day was significant both professionally and personally. They emphasized the uniqueness of the encounter as a safe and rare framework for critical and open discussion of Palestinian- Jewish partnership—especially in a time of conflict. Over 90% expressed interest in participating in follow-up initiatives and stressed the importance of such spaces for promoting institutional responsibility and driving deep change in academia.

The meeting of academic and administrative staff—Jewish and Palestinian—was itself an educational-political act. It forged connections, surfaced pain, clarified questions, and opened a horizon for joint action. The takeaways from the day align with Prof. Tamar Haggar’s call to view academia not only as a site of crisis, but as a moral arena where critical stances, radical listening, and repair are possible.

This is not a process completed in a single day, but the beginning of a long-term effort to reimagine the campus as not only a site of knowledge, but also of belonging, solidarity, and action.

7. Participant Quotes

Palestinian participant (bi-national dialogue):

“Innocence drew me to come, and shame almost kept me out.”

Palestinian participant (uni-national dialogue):

“We need a place where we can feel safe to speak without giving up the truest parts of ourselves.”



From written feedback:

- *“This day allowed me to see myself not only as part of the system—but also as someone who can influence it.”*
- *“There were no slogans here—there was courage. We finally talked about what everyone is silent about.”*
- *“On this day, I could finally put fear aside and speak as I am.”*