

On October 7, 2023, Hamas terrorists invaded Israel under the guise of thousands of rockets fired into Israeli towns and cities, [massacred](#) over 1,100 Israelis and foreign civilians, [incinerated families in their homes](#), [tortured children in front of their parents and parents in front of their children](#), and [brutally raped and mutilated women young and old](#). Hamas kidnapped [more than 240 people](#), among them toddlers, children, young men and women, and elderly men and women over 80 years old. Two members of the Hebrew University community, [Carmel Gat](#) and [Sagui Dekel-Chen](#), were kidnapped from their homes that day and are still held captive with more than 130 innocent hostages that are still held in Hamas' captivity, [suffering torture and rape](#) and [abuse](#).

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem is a highly diverse intellectual community of students and faculty from various nationalities, ethnicities, and religions, including Jews, Muslims, Druze, and Christians, Israeli and Palestinian. Immediately after the war broke out, the University invested immense efforts in maintaining a supportive learning environment for all its members, including counsel, special ad-hoc scholarships and student support, and special discussions and tools for teachers on how to approach issues relating to the war in multicultural classrooms.

Among other measures, the University also made it clear that it will not tolerate any expression that supports or incites violence, including statements that support the October 7th attack or encourage the elimination of Israel, and/or racist statements aimed at Arabs, Jews, or anyone else. We firmly believe that those who explicitly or implicitly legitimize these barbaric, hateful, and racist actions have no place at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, or, indeed, at any other university around the globe. We are proud to say that we just now finished a full semester of teaching that was conducted peacefully and without any observed tensions between the diverse members of our community.

In a recent interview, Prof. Shalhoub Kevorkian made various statements that denied the crimes committed by Hamas against children and women during the brutal attack of October 7, 2023, and specifically expressed disbelief in the brutal rape and sexual assault inflicted on Israeli women. Ignoring and dismissing the massive evidence and testimonies that were amassed on this grave matter, Shalhoub Kevorkian said, among other statements, that "we don't see women coming out and saying what happened so women's bodies are being used as political weapons." And that "they [the Zionist entity] will use any lie. They started with babies, they continued with rape, they will continue with a million other lies every day." Consequently, we condemned Prof. Shalhoub Kevorkian for these statements. We are confident that you yourselves would condemn a faculty member who denies or even underestimates brutal acts of rape.

In addition, the President and Rector of the Hebrew University suspended Prof. Shalhoub Kevorkian from teaching in the last week of the semester, to prevent tensions on campus and allow students to finish the semester and concentrate on their studies and exams. As stated in the Rector's [letter](#), the suspension did not have any implications whatsoever on Prof. Shalhoub Kevorkian's salary or her academic privileges.

Yet a question was asked, how a researcher who teaches about sexual violence against women in the School of Social Work can continue to teach students after she expresses such public disbelief in testimonies of rape victims.

Following these events, the Rector of the Hebrew University, Prof. Tamir Sheafer, and Prof. Shalhoub Kevorkian met to discuss the matters on March 27, 2024. In that meeting, Prof. Shalhoub Kevorkian clarified that as a critical feminist researcher, she believes all victims and does not doubt their

testimonies. She also clarified that she does not deny the fact that the Oct. 7th Hamas attack on Southern Israel included multiple cases of rape and sexual assault. Following her clarification, Prof. Shalhoub Kevorkian is allowed to teach all of her regular teaching load.

Best regards,

Prof. Asher Cohen, President
Prof. Tamir Sheafer, Rector (Provost)