
**Advocacy NGOs in
Academic
Frameworks:
Harvard University
Case Study**

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Advocacy NGOs in Academic Frameworks: Harvard University Case Study

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NGO Monitor's mission is to provide information and analysis, promote accountability, and support discussion on the reports and activities of NGOs claiming to advance human rights and humanitarian agendas.

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Introduction

The objective of this research project is to document and analyze the implications arising from the ties between university frameworks and influential non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in political advocacy on Israel. The interest in this interaction emerged from the casual observation regarding numerous joint programs, publications, faculty links, advocacy statements, and other forms of overlap between the two sets of actors. This interaction became very salient and contested in the context of the events of October 7, 2023 (the Hamas-led attack and atrocities) and Israel's response. The growing evidence of systematic cooperation between NGOs and selected university programs resulted in undertaking this research project.

The case study presented in this report is focused on a number of programs in different units of Harvard University - specifically (1) the Harvard FXB Center for Health & Human Rights in the School of Public Health, which, in turn, jointly operated the Palestine Program for Health and Human Rights with Birzeit University in Ramallah (this collaboration was suspended in March 2025); (2) the Harvard Law School (HLS), which hosts the Human Rights Program (HRP), the Human Rights Journal and the International Human Rights Clinic (IHRC); and (3) the Carr-Ryan Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard John F. Kennedy School of Government.¹

The importance of undertaking this analysis is the result of a recognition of the problematic aspects of these close and often overlapping relationships, resulting from the inherently contrasting and inconsistent normative objectives and practices that characterize the academic and NGO advocacy domains.

At least in theory, and in justifying public support, universities emphasize the advancement of knowledge, critical thought, and teaching of students based on empirical research, unfettered by ideological and political barriers. Furthermore, according to academic norms, research must be independently verifiable and reproducible, and publications ought to be subject to rigorous peer review. While the practice in many university activities often deviates from and violates these principles, including in the programs examined in this report, the principles have not been erased.

In contrast, the ethos and objectives of NGOs operating in the realms of human rights and related issues are focused on advocacy, in which research is often a facade, and without debate or critical thought. NGOs do not search for truth - instead, they pre-select their targets and then claim to find evidence to support the accusations. The expertise attributed to NGO staff members is not based, even in theory, on verifiable and unbiased empirical research, and the reports and other products that they produce are not subject to any form of external and independent assessment, review, or oversight.

In addition, many NGOs claiming to produce research and analysis in the realms of universal human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL), and to engage in advocacy, are increasingly

¹ Additional case studies currently in preparation include Columbia University, the University of Toronto and the Irish Centre for Human Rights, National University of Ireland (NUI), Galway.

understood to pursue highly biased political and ideological objectives, particularly in singling out and applying double standards regarding Israel.²

The NGOs discussed in this report based on their links to Harvard University programs and staff members cover a wide spectrum, including “superpowers” with wide international agendas, such as Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International; powerful specialized groups such as Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), Save the Children, and the Norwegian Refugee Council; as well as groups focusing narrowly on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict zone. Among the latter, a network of NGOs, including Al-Haq and Addameer, have been designated by Israel as fronts operated by the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) terror organization, as cited in the index of NGOs at the end of this report.

Systematic analyses of the agendas and activities of the most influential and “highly respected” organizations, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, clearly demonstrate that claims of neutrality, evenhandedness, and universality are inconsistent with the evidence from publications, pronouncements, and social media activity.³

In parallel, NGO claims to produce independently verifiable research reports documenting alleged violations and based on accepted interpretations of IHL, as distinct from political tracts, have also been repeatedly exposed as unsubstantiated and misleading.⁴ This pattern has been repeated and amplified many times over in the post-October 2023 NGO reports claiming to “prove” that Israel is guilty of genocide, intentional starvation, and other monstrous crimes in Gaza, and almost entirely erasing the context of the atrocities perpetrated by Hamas and its allies.⁵

As documented in the following research report, these highly toxic, entirely one-sided and politicized reports, that are the antithesis of critical debate and independent thought, have been adopted and endorsed by faculty members, fellows, graduate students and others associated with the university frameworks.

These activities, in turn, have contributed significantly to the antisemitism that is documented in detail by Harvard University’s Presidential Task Force on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias.⁶ They

² According to the consensus IHRA working definition, manifestations of antisemitism include: “Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor,” and “Applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.” International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. “What Is Antisemitism?”

<https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>

³ Gerald M. Steinberg, “Human Rights Watch’s anti-Israel Agenda,” *Israel Affairs*, 2020
[10.1080/13537121.2021.1864847](https://www.israelforpeace.org/10.1080/13537121.2021.1864847)

⁴ Gerald M. Steinberg, Anne Herzberg and Jordan Berman, *Best Practices for Human Rights and Humanitarian NGO Fact-Finding*, Nijhoff Brill Publishers, Leiden, 2012

⁵ Goda, Norman Jw. “The Genocide Libel.” Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism, n.d.

<https://isca.indiana.edu/publication-research/research-paper-series/norman-jw-goda-research-paper.html>

⁶ Harvard University, “FINAL REPORT Presidential Task Force on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias.” April 29, 2025. <https://www.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/FINAL-Harvard-ASAIB-Report-4.29.25.pdf>

have also damaged academic integrity, credibility of higher education institutions in free societies, and the reputation of once-esteemed establishments such as Harvard.

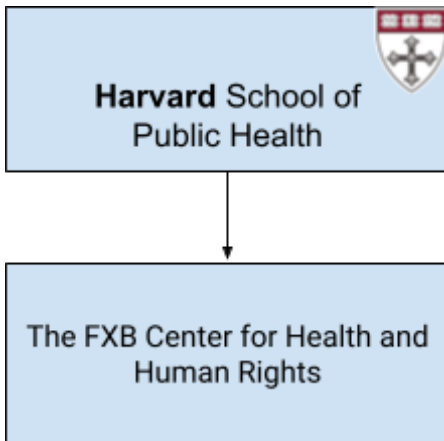
Therefore, we argue, the close cooperation between academic (or, in many cases, quasi-academic) programs and publications and prominent advocacy NGOs in the realms of human rights and IHL is inconsistent with, and in violation of, basic academic norms. As demonstrated, the specific NGOs that are associated with the university centers, programs, and faculties examined in this study systematically demonize Israel and call for its demise (many are Palestinian NGOs), in contrast to the academic norm of political neutrality and balance.

It is important to note that in this preliminary publication, we are focusing on the NGO links of specific Harvard University programs – we did not attempt to present a comprehensive analysis of political advocacy or anti-Israel bias associated with these frameworks. (Although in some cases, we include blatant examples manifested beyond NGOs, such as platforming blatantly biased UN officials.) We also do not claim to comprehensively document and analyze all the university programs with major NGO links and influence. For example, additional research on this issue should include documentation of biased NGO publications in course syllabi and reading lists.

Furthermore, this research does not address related issues, such as possible funding links between the NGOs and the academic frameworks. Given the emphasis on transparency in foreign state funding for universities, based on concerns regarding the influence that such funding can exert on the academic content and activities, it would be useful to know whether there are overlapping sources of income with the main NGOs partners of faculty members, fellows, and graduate students. These are issues that can and should be taken up in subsequent research.

Notwithstanding these limits, we believe that the information presented in this preliminary report on a selected group of Harvard University frameworks provides an important dimension for beginning a discussion of the implications of these issues, and for discussing possible measures that can address this departure from academic norms.

Harvard FXB Center for Health & Human Rights



The François-Xavier Bagnoud (FXB) Center for Health and Human Rights, founded in 1993, is a quasi-academic framework under the Harvard School of Public Health. Its official goal is to “promote equity and dignity for those oppressed by racism, poverty and stigma, nationally and around the world.”⁷ It considers itself to be “the only university-wide center in the United States dedicated to the health and human rights” of Palestinians.⁸ The Center partners with scholars, practitioners, and officials, “to advance health and human rights.”⁹

Harvard FXB Faculty, Affiliates, and Fellows

A number of the FXB Center’s fellows, visitors, and other personnel have extensive links to political advocacy NGOs active in attacks against Israel.

Yara M. Asi is a FXB visiting scientist under the Palestine Program for Health and Human Rights. She is also a non-resident fellow at the Arab Center Washington DC (a Qatari institute directed by Azmi Bishara, an Israeli Arab citizen who fled Israel in 2007 after he became the subject of a criminal investigation for acts of treason and espionage),¹⁰ and fellow at two highly visible anti-Israel NGOs – the Foundation for Middle East Peace and Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN).¹¹ She previously worked for Amnesty International.¹² Her publications, which include “Structural racism and

⁷ <https://fxb.harvard.edu/our-history/>

⁸ <https://fxb.harvard.edu/our-history/>

⁹ <https://fxb.harvard.edu/our-history/>; <https://www.ft.com/content/7243c042-0d9a-11e4-b149-00144feabdc0>

¹⁰ <https://fxb.harvard.edu/directory/yara-m-asi-phd/>

¹¹ <https://dawnmena.org/experts/>

¹² <https://yara-asi.com/about>

the health of Palestinian citizens of Israel,”¹³ rely very heavily on material from anti-Israeli NGOs, such as Adalah (12 bibliography items), Al-Haq, Amnesty, BADIL, B’Tselem, Human Rights Watch, and Physicians for Human Rights Israel.

Rania Muhareb is an FXB Fellow.¹⁴ Her research focuses “on the right to health in Palestine in the context of apartheid, settler colonialism, and genocide.”¹⁵ She completed her PhD at the Irish Centre for Human Rights in the School of Law at the University of Galway (2020-2024). Prior to this, she worked as a legal researcher and advocacy officer with the NGO Al-Haq (2017-2020), which is linked to the PFLP terror group.¹⁶ She is also a policy member of the US-based advocacy NGO Al-Shabaka – the Palestinian Policy Network.¹⁷ She calls for “the radical dismantling of Zionist settler colonialism,”¹⁸ and on October 8, 2023, she shared on her X account an article titled “The West's hypocrisy towards Gaza's breakout is stomach-turning” (emphasis added).¹⁹ In 2022, she co-authored an advocacy blog post posted by the Institute for Palestine Studies titled “Dismantle What? Amnesty's Conflicted Messaging on Israeli Apartheid” that included a number of citations to NGOs.²⁰

Sawsan Abdulrahim, as noted above, is a Visiting Scientist at FXB.²¹ Her LinkedIn activity as of March 2025 (it was deleted in April) is almost entirely dedicated to posts about Palestinian issues, sharing posts of former executive director of Human Rights Watch, Kenneth Roth; Al-Haq; Al-Shabaka; and Doctors Against Genocide.²² She has referred to Israel as an “apartheid state” in a discussion titled “Gaza, Israel, Palestine and the Toll of War” at Duke University.²³

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https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=7-zce7QAAAAJ&citation_for_view=7-zce7QAAAAJ:L8Ckcad2t8MC

14 <https://fxb.harvard.edu/fxb-fellows/>

15 <https://fxb.harvard.edu/directory/rania-muhareb-phd-llm/?cp-dir-id=11692>; As of April 30, 2025, the text was changed to: “her research focuses on the right to health in Palestine, drawing on the UN Apartheid Convention and Genocide Convention and the settler colonialism framework.”

16 https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/generalpage/terrorists_in_suits/en/De-Legitimization%20Brochure.pdf

17 <https://al-shabaka.org/authors/rania-muhareb/>

18 <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1BetnPS2X3/>

19 https://x.com/Rania_Muhareb/status/1711075923683053896

20 Soheir Asaad and Rania Muhareb, ‘Dismantle What? Amnesty's Conflicted Messaging on Israeli Apartheid’ (Institute for Palestine Studies, 15 February 2022) <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1652565>.

21 <https://fxb.harvard.edu/affiliates-scholars/>

22 <https://www.linkedin.com/in/sawsan-abdulrahim-03160b98/recent-activity/all/>; this linkedin account has since been deleted.

23 <https://today.duke.edu/2024/02/humanizing-humanitarian-crisis-middle-east>

Dr. Weeam Hammoudeh - until April 2025, listed as a Visiting Scientist at FXB and Assistant Professor at Birzeit University's Institute of Community and Public Health.²⁴ She is a member of advocacy networks including the Palestine-Global Mental Health network, the Lancet Palestinian Health Alliance (involving the UK-based advocacy NGO Medical Aid for Palestinians)²⁵ and a policy member at the US-based NGO Al-Shabaka.²⁶ Her academic publications rely heavily on material originating from additional anti-Israeli advocacy NGOs, such as Amnesty International, Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR), Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem (ARIJ), B'Tselem, and Gisha.²⁷

Dr. David Mills is an FXB Affiliate.²⁸ He is also an Assistant Professor in pediatrics at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine, and a co-instructor of the Palestine Social Medicine intensive summer course.²⁹ Mills worked for five years with the Palestine Children Relief Fund (PCRF) – a highly problematic US-based advocacy NGO, as detailed by NGO Monitor.³⁰ Many of his publications focus on alleged Israeli mistreatment of Palestinians,³¹ (without reference to Israeli victims of terrorism), and sources and citations reflect heavy reliance on anti-Israeli NGOs, including Amnesty International, BADIL, Médecins Sans Frontières, and Human Rights Watch.³²

Dr. Jumana Odeh is an FXB Visiting Scholar.³³ She was a project manager volunteer for Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees. She has worked with UNICEF, Save the Children/USA, Oxfam, and Norwegian People's Aid. She was a founding member and served as president of Physicians for Human Rights/Palestine. She is a team member of the International Experts Evaluation for Shafallah Center for Children with Special Needs in Doha, Qatar, and a former social work advisor for Qatar

²⁴ <https://web.archive.org/web/20250224104604/https://fxb.harvard.edu/affiliates-scholars/>; her name has since been deleted from FXB website. See also <https://www.jerusalemstory.com/en/article/weeam-hammoudeh-taking-pulse-palestines-public-health>

²⁵

https://ngo-monitor.org/reports/the_lancet_as_a_political_platform_for_ngos_study_of_articles_on_palestinian_and_israeli_health_care_/#intro_and_background

²⁶ <https://fxb.harvard.edu/directory/weeam-hammoudeh-phd/?cp-dir-id=12479>; as of May 1 2025, this webpage has been deleted.

²⁷ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3884905/>; <https://academic.oup.com/eurpub/article/22/5/732/497666>

²⁸ <https://fxb.harvard.edu/affiliates-scholars/>

²⁹ <https://fxb.harvard.edu/directory/david-mills-md/?cp-dir-id=12479>

³⁰ <https://www.palestinianspodcast.com/episodes-1/2019/2/1/bonus-david-and-abood-messi-or-ronaldo>

³¹ <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/David-Mills-35/research>

³² <https://gh.bmj.com/content/bmjgh/4/3/e001673.full.pdf>;
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/379506735_'Nowhere_and_no_one_is_safe'_spatial_analysis_of_damage_to_critical_civilian_infrastructure_in_the_Gaza_Strip_during_the_first_phase_of_the_Israeli_military_campaign_7_October_to_22_November_2023

³³ <https://fxb.harvard.edu/directory/jumana-odeh/?cp-dir-id=12479>

Foundation.³⁴ In social media interventions since 10/7, Odeh addressed Israel’s “war of extermination” (emphasis added) against children in Gaza.³⁵

Nadine Bahour is a Research Program Coordinator at the FXB Center,³⁶ a co-author (with Basset) of “Are hospitals collateral damage?”, and served as the Co-President of the Harvard College Palestine Solidarity Committee.³⁷ According to the Center’s website, “Nadine is interested in studying the impact of settler colonialism on healthcare access and quality.”³⁸ In 2022, she was among a group of students who demanded to include a lesson on Palestine in a Global Health and Health Policy class. Following that demand, a group of students suggested adding reading material, including reports from Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and B’Tselem.³⁹

Another Visiting Scholar, Abdul El-Sayed,⁴⁰ promotes anti-Israel rhetoric on his different social media accounts.⁴¹ None of his academic publications deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.⁴² Dr. Rita Issa, a visiting fellow at FXB,⁴³ has worked with Medecins Sans Frontieres. On her personal website, she writes that “we sh(c)ould all be activists.”⁴⁴ None of her academic publications deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.⁴⁵ She shared and wrote several anti-Israeli posts on her X account.⁴⁶ FXB Center affiliate, Lara Jirmanus,⁴⁷ has accused Israel of “apartheid,”⁴⁸ “terrorism,”⁴⁹ and “genocide.”⁵⁰ She has not published academic articles about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.⁵¹

³⁴ <https://phcc-pal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Jumana-Odeh-CV.pdf>

³⁵ <https://www.tiktok.com/@ricardokaramofficial/video/7303939789001116946>

³⁶ <https://fxb.harvard.edu/people/>

³⁷ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nadinebahour/>

³⁸ <https://fxb.harvard.edu/directory/nadine-bahour-2/?cp-dir-id=11242>

³⁹ <https://www.thenation.com/article/activism/harvard-roth-palestine-free-speech/>

⁴⁰ <https://fxb.harvard.edu/directory/abdul-el-sayed/?cp-dir-id=12479>

⁴¹ https://x.com/search?q=from%3AAbdulElSayed%20israel&src=typed_query

⁴² https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=0RxsP2cAAAAJ&view_op=list_works&sortby=pubdate

⁴³ <https://fxb.harvard.edu/directory/rita-issa-2/>

⁴⁴ <https://www.drritaissa.com/cv>

⁴⁵ <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0051-5595>

⁴⁶ https://x.com/search?q=from%3ADrRitaIssa%20gaza&src=typed_query&f=top

⁴⁷ <https://fxb.harvard.edu/directory/lara-jirmanus/>

⁴⁸ <https://x.com/larazjmd/status/1403337506649739275>

⁴⁹ <https://x.com/larazjmd/status/1451889454923325451>

⁵⁰ <https://x.com/larazjmd/status/1712640240148480000>

⁵¹ <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Lara-Jirmanus/research>

Osama Tanous, FXB visiting scientist and co-director of the Palestine Program for Health and Human Rights, is also a board member of Physicians for Human Rights-I and B'Tselem.⁵² He wrote several pieces for the Israeli political advocacy NGO +972 Magazine.⁵³

The academic and quasi-academic advocacy publications of FXB faculty emphasize NGO references and sources as the basis for factual and legal claims. For example, an article by Wispelwey Bram, Tanous Osama, Asi Yara, Hammoudeh Weeam, and Mills David, titled “Because its power remains naturalized: introducing the settler colonial determinants of health” and published in *Frontiers in Public Health* (2023), cites reports by Amnesty (“Israel’s apartheid against Palestinians: cruel system of domination and crime against humanity.” London, 2022)⁵⁴ and Al Haq (“Israeli apartheid: tool of Zionist settler Colonialism.” Ramallah: 2022),⁵⁵ among other advocacy and propaganda groups, as well as UN agency publications that, in turn, repeat the claims of the NGO network.⁵⁶

The FXB Center’s Director is Mary T. Bassett (MD), Professor of the Practice of Health and Human Rights, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Harvard School of Public Health.⁵⁷ A review of her publication record reflects the absence of any expertise on health issues in conflict zones, in general, or regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular.⁵⁸ She has consistently displayed an anti-Israeli ideological bias, which is distributed widely through the Center’s website and in the media. For example, a week after the October 7th atrocities, she published an “End-of-year message” on the FXB website (since deleted), in which she wrote of “the potential genocide facing civilians in Gaza.”⁵⁹ In May 2024, she published an op-ed in which she condemned what she described as the world’s silence towards “Israel’s relentless attacks on Gaza—and, more specifically, its war on Gaza’s medical system” and “the indiscriminate murder of health workers and patients in their hospital beds” (emphasis added).⁶⁰

Notwithstanding the absence of any research or background on Israeli-Palestinian issues, Bassett was a co-author (with a number of FXB-based co-authors) of an article in *PLOS Global Public Health* titled “Are hospitals collateral damage? Assessing geospatial proximity of 2000 lb bomb detonations to hospital facilities in the Gaza Strip from October 7 to November 17, 2023.” The advocacy article

⁵² <https://fxb.harvard.edu/directory/osama-tanous-md/>

⁵³ <https://www.972mag.com/writer/osama-tanous/>

⁵⁴ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2022/en/>

⁵⁵

https://www.alhaq.org/cached_uploads/download/2022/12/22/israeli-apartheid-web-final-1-page-view-1671712165.pdf

⁵⁶ <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/public-health/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2023.1137428>

⁵⁷ <https://fxb.harvard.edu/directory/mary-t-bassett-md-mph/?cp-dir-id=11242>

⁵⁸ <https://connects.catalyst.harvard.edu/Profiles/display/Person/173264>

⁵⁹

<https://web.archive.org/web/20250404123256/https://fxb.harvard.edu/2023/12/20/yearend-reflections-by-fxb-director-dr-mary-bassett/>

⁶⁰ <https://www.thenation.com/article/society/new-england-journal-gaza-medical-establishment/>

included numerous references to unverifiable media reports, biased UN publications, and self-citations to publications of some of the authors.⁶¹

Events and publications

The numerous links between the Center and the NGO network, particularly on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, are reflected in public and social communication frameworks that promote extensive and consistently biased activities related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The publications page of the FXB Center⁶² features items that rely on the same circle of anti-Israeli NGOs. For example, in June 2024, “an urgent call to advocate,” under the title “Psychological and Social Suffering of Another Generation of Palestinian Children Living under Occupation,” co-authored by FXB Visiting Scientist, Sawsan Abdulrahim (details below), quotes extensively from claims and accusations produced by Human Rights Watch, Save the Children, and Médecins Sans Frontières.⁶³ On February 5, 2025, three FXB staff members published an article in the single-blind peer review journal *Conflict and Health*. Under the heading “Realising health justice in Palestine: beyond humanitarian voices,” the article relies extensively on press items NGO claims including Amnesty International, B’Tselem, Law for Palestine, Physicians for Human Rights Israel, and Medecins Sans Frontieres. Some of the sources were written by other members of FXB.⁶⁴

Similarly, FXB has held a number of seminars and guest lectures related to the Gaza conflict.⁶⁵ On the Center’s events page, more than 40 percent (14 out of 34) are dedicated to the war in Gaza and the Palestinians.⁶⁶

Many of these events feature activists from anti-Israel NGOs. For example, on November 19, 2024, under the title “Targeting Health: Detention, torture, and attacks on Palestinian healthcare workers,” speakers included A. Kayum Ahmed and Milena Ansari from Human Rights Watch (Ansari was previously employed by PFLP-linked Addameer).⁶⁷ This event, like others in the series, was co-sponsored and promoted by other Harvard frameworks, including the Divinity School, Center for Middle East Studies, and the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy. On September 24, 2024, under the

⁶¹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39387878/>

⁶² <https://fxb.harvard.edu/fxb-center-writing-in-peer-reviewed-publications/>; see also <https://fxb.harvard.edu/racial-justice/palestine-program/>

⁶³ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11197870/>

⁶⁴ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s13031-024-00634-0#Bib1>

⁶⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/@fxbharvard>

⁶⁶ <https://fxb.harvard.edu/events-calendar/>

⁶⁷

https://fxb.harvard.edu/calendar_event/targeting-health-detention-torture-and-attacks-on-palestinian-healthcare-workers-3/

title “The Polio Crisis in Gaza: Causes, Challenges of Vaccination, and Future Implications,” speakers included Guy Shalev, the Executive Director of Physicians for Human Rights Israel.⁶⁸

There are no events or speakers that present alternative narratives, for example focusing on the health aspects of the brutal attacks targeting Israelis or the torture of hostages. According to Harvard’s Task Force on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias, “Several students raised concerns with the Task Force about these webinars, alleging that some of the featured speakers presented a demonizing view of Israel and Israelis. One student told us that the FXB programming created the impression that ‘Israel exists solely to oppress Palestinians, and nothing else.’”⁶⁹

In addition, under the Palestine Program for Health and Human Rights framework (see extensive analysis below), FXB offered (until the program was suspended in March 2025) an annual three-week summer “Palestine Social Medicine Course” designed “to introduce students to the social, structural, political, and historical aspects... beyond the biological basis of disease” (emphasis added).⁷⁰ The program takes place at Birzeit University in Ramallah - an institution that is closely associated with Hamas and has glorified “martyrs” (i.e. perpetrators) of the Hamas’ October 7 massacre.⁷¹ Curriculum topics include, for example, “Settler colonialism and its manifestations in Palestine.” Many of the speakers and activities included in this “academic course” under the sponsorship of the School of Public Health are closely affiliated with advocacy NGOs. In March 2025, Harvard suspended the partnership with Birzeit pending a review.⁷²

Journal

The FXB Center is the co-publisher of the journal Health and Human Rights,⁷³ which included a special section in its December 2022 issue, titled “Settler Colonialism, Structural Racism, and the Palestinian Right to Health.”⁷⁴ Articles include the examination of “the social construction of race as a determinant

⁶⁸

https://fxb.harvard.edu/calendar_event/the-polio-crisis-in-gaza-causes-challenges-of-vaccination-and-future-implications/

⁶⁹ Harvard University, “FINAL REPORT Presidential Task Force on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias.” April 29, 2025. <https://www.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/FINAL-Harvard-ASAIB-Report-4.29.25.pdf>

⁷⁰ <https://fxb.harvard.edu/racial-justice/palestine-program/palestine-social-medicine-course/>

⁷¹

<https://www.thejc.com/news/usa/harvard-to-run-course-on-settler-colonialism-at-palestinian-university-that-glorified-martyrs-after-october-7-i3pnffb9>

⁷² <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2025/3/27/harvard-suspends-birzeit-partnership/> ; <https://freebeacon.com/campus/at-harvards-center-for-health-and-human-rights-academics-paint-israeli-jews-as-the-real-terrorists/>

⁷³

<https://www.hhrjournal.org/about-hhr/about-harvard-university-press-and-the-fxb-center-for-health-and-human-rights/>

⁷⁴ <https://www.hhrjournal.org/volume-24-issue-2-december-2022/#palestine>

of health inequities in Palestine,”⁷⁵ “how settler-colonial societies use liberal frameworks of citizenship and capitalism to carry out their racialized projects of elimination,”⁷⁶ (emphases added) and “seek to contextualize amputations sustained by Palestinians... within a framework of settler-colonial ideology and practice.”⁷⁷

Most of these articles include numerous references to, and reflect the major influence of, the advocacy NGO network, including Physicians for Human Rights Israel, Adalah, Human Rights Watch, Al-Haq, BADIL, Palestinian Center for Human Rights, and Jerusalem Legal and Human Rights Centre. One was co-authored by two NGO officials without academic backgrounds – Hadas Ziv, director of activities and ethics at Physicians for Human Rights Israel, and Ghada Majadli, at the time, director of the department of the occupied Palestinian territory at Physicians for Human Rights Israel, and subsequently a staffer at Al Shabaka.⁷⁸

FXB's Palestine Program for Health and Human Rights

FXB collaborated with the Institute of Community and Public Health at Birzeit University to create The Palestine Program for Health and Human Rights, which “utilizes a decolonial framework in program development, leadership, and engagement” (emphasis added).⁷⁹ It is self-described as an advocacy framework – “an academic hub engaging in a broadly collaborative justice and rights-based approach in the study of Palestinian health.”⁸⁰ On March 27, 2025, it was announced that the Harvard School of Public Health suspended its partnership with Birzeit University following an internal review.⁸¹

Projects of the Palestine Program for Health and Human Rights include, for example, a Facebook page called “Voices from Gaza,” in which “Salam, a fifth-year medical student at Al-Azhar University which was a target of bombardment, talks about the difficulties she faces as a student and describes the humanitarian conditions in Gaza, November 2023.”⁸²

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<https://www.hhrjournal.org/2022/12/06/its-not-whatever-because-this-is-where-the-problem-starts-racialized-strategies-of-elimination-as-determinants-of-health-in-palestine/>

⁷⁶

<https://www.hhrjournal.org/2022/12/06/covid-19-vaccination-in-palestine-israel-citizenship-capitalism-and-the-logic-of-elimination/>

⁷⁷

<https://www.hhrjournal.org/2022/12/06/amputating-the-body-fragmenting-the-nation-palestinian-amputees-in-gaza/>

⁷⁸

<https://www.hhrjournal.org/2022/12/06/amputating-the-body-fragmenting-the-nation-palestinian-amputees-in-gaza/>

⁷⁹ <https://fxb.harvard.edu/racial-justice/palestine-program/>

⁸⁰ <https://fxb.harvard.edu/racial-justice/palestine-program/>

⁸¹ <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2025/3/27/harvard-suspends-birzeit-partnership/>

⁸² <https://www.facebook.com/100092492450932/posts/239791149113965/?mibextid=rS40aB7S9Ucbxw6v>

The Harvard FXB Palestine Program webinars reflect the one-sided advocacy focus and central NGO influence and participation of NGO officials, in contrast to qualified academics. On March 12, 2025, the Program hosted a webinar “on attacks on children in Gaza,”⁸³ with Budour Hassan from Amnesty International.

On November 19, 2024, it hosted a discussion on “the impact of attacks, torture, detention, siege, and direct targeting of health workers in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.”⁸⁴ Speakers included Milena Ansari, a researcher at Human Rights Watch⁸⁵ and previously employed by Addameer.⁸⁶ The webinar was co-sponsored by the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School and Birzeit University in Ramallah (see analysis below).

In December 2022, the Palestine Program hosted a webinar on “Settler Colonialism, Structural Racism, and The Palestinian Right to Health.”⁸⁷ Among the speakers were Ghada Majadli, director at Physicians for Human Rights Israel at the time;⁸⁸ Razzan Quran, who worked previously for Medical Aid for Palestinians;⁸⁹ and Osama Tanous, a board member of Physicians for Human Rights Israel and B’Tselem.⁹⁰

The FXB Palestine Program also hosted the “Radcliffe Workshop: Past, Present, and Future of Palestinian Health,” which consisted of blatant advocacy based on NGO accusations, and centered on a statement that began: “In 2021, international human rights groups began to rhetorically recognize what Palestinians on the ground had been reporting for years; that they were living under a system of segregation, discrimination, and violence that constitutes the crime of apartheid.”⁹¹

The Palestine Program is also responsible for the course “The Settler Colonial Determinants of Health” - GHP (Department of Global Health and Population) 264 in the Harvard School of Public Health – which “introduces students to the concept of settler colonialism and its health equity implications,” utilizing

⁸³ <https://x.com/PalestinePHHR/status/1896929205092487235>

⁸⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QkSLDiCvL9U>

⁸⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/about/people/milena-ansari-0>

⁸⁶ <https://www.addameer.org/ar/node/4641>

⁸⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnPZv8eY5sc>

⁸⁸

https://fxb.harvard.edu/calendar_event/settler-colonialism-structural-racism-and-the-palestinian-right-to-health-special-edition-a-conversation-with-the-authors/

⁸⁹ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/razzan-quran-44342b108/details/experience/>

⁹⁰

https://fxb.harvard.edu/calendar_event/settler-colonialism-structural-racism-and-the-palestinian-right-to-health-special-edition-a-conversation-with-the-authors/

⁹¹ <https://fxb.harvard.edu/racial-justice/palestine-program/projects/>

“case studies from the United States and Palestine/Israel.”⁹² As of the 2025 semester, this advocacy course under the facade of public health was no longer taught.



GHP 264: The Settler Colonial Determinants of Health at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

Harvard Law School and International Human Rights Clinic

A number of Harvard Law School (HLS) frameworks include close cooperation with influential NGOs, including the Human Rights Program (HRP), the Harvard Human Rights Journal, and the International Human Rights Clinic (IHRC).

HRP’s stated mission is to “to inspire critical engagement with the human rights project ... through impartial, innovative, and rigorous research. ...The Program fosters student participation in human rights activities through summer and post-graduate fellowships, and support for experiential learning. We partner with student organizations, such as the Harvard Human Rights Journal and HLS Advocates for Human Rights... Our staff also advises students wishing to conduct research projects with human rights organizations.” Activities include international conferences, working papers, conference proceedings and books, and a Visiting Fellows program that “draws advocates and scholars from around the world to conduct primary research.”⁹³

On February 26, 2025, HRP and the Harvard Human Rights Journal hosted Amnesty International USA Executive Director Paul O'Brien, “in connection with his forthcoming Harvard Human Rights Journal article” on the law of genocide, the International Court of Justice, “connecting the conversation to

⁹² <https://fxb.harvard.edu/racial-justice/palestine-program/projects/>

⁹³ <https://hrp.law.harvard.edu/who-we-are/about-us/>

current events in Gaza.”⁹⁴ O’Brein has frequently expressed deep hostility to Israel, as in a 2022 appearance before the Women’s National Democratic Club, where he reportedly declared that Israel “shouldn’t exist as a Jewish state” and that his “gut” told him American Jews preferred a “safe Jewish space” over a Jewish state.⁹⁵ He later said his comments were taken out of context. All 25 Jewish House Democrats condemned his remarks as “deeply offensive.”⁹⁶

O’Brien’s talk and forthcoming (as of April 2025) article are extensions of Amnesty International’s December 2024 report⁹⁷ and campaign accusing Israel of genocide.⁹⁸ O’Brien and Amnesty have been strongly criticized and condemned on the grounds that the accusations against Israel are politically and ideologically motivated, factually unsupported (particularly the absence of credible information on intention), legally untenable, and contribute to Holocaust inversion.⁹⁹

Also within the HRP, the activities of the International Human Rights Clinic (IHRC) reflect numerous and prominent connections with the NGO network, as detailed below. According to the clinic’s website, “a central aspect of the student experience includes accessing mentorship and career guidance.” The clinic prides itself on finding jobs for its alumni at a variety of NGOs around the globe.¹⁰⁰ In this sense, the clinic acts as a training framework and “feeder” for the NGO ideological advocacy network.

Faculty

Bonnie Docherty is a lecturer and director of the IHRC’s Armed Conflict and Civilian Protection Initiative, and also advisor in the Crisis, Conflict and Arms Division of Human Rights Watch (HRW).¹⁰¹ According to HRW, Docherty “has investigated the conduct of war and civilian casualties” in Gaza, Israel, and Lebanon.¹⁰² Docherty authored a November 2024 HRW report titled “Beyond Burning: The Ripple Effects of Incendiary Weapons and Increasing Calls for International Action,”¹⁰³ which analyzes four cases - Gaza, Lebanon, Ukraine, and Syria. The analysis of the IDF spans 10 pages, compared to three

⁹⁴

<https://hls.harvard.edu/events/the-law-of-genocide-lemkin-gaza-with-paul-obrien-executive-director-of-amnesty-international-usa/>

⁹⁵ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/amnestys-us-director-israel-shouldnt-exist-as-a-state-for-the-jewish-people/>

⁹⁶ <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/article-701307>

⁹⁷

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

⁹⁸ <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2025/2/27/amnesty-international-genocide-talk/>

⁹⁹ <https://fathomjournal.org/2022-introduction-enough-is-enough-on-amnestys-antisemitic-apartheid-report/>

¹⁰⁰ <https://humanrightsclinic.law.harvard.edu/for-students/>

¹⁰¹ <https://humanrightsclinic.law.harvard.edu/team/bonnie-docherty/>

¹⁰² <https://www.hrw.org/about/people/bonnie-docherty>

¹⁰³ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/11/07/incendiary-weapons-new-use-calls-immediate-action>

pages combined for Syria and Ukraine. Docherty’s report erases the background and context of the conflict in Lebanon, and there is no mention of Hezbollah.

Citing unverified (and largely unverifiable) local testimonies as reported by HRW themselves and other NGOs such as Amnesty International, she repeats accusations that the IDF was using white phosphorus munitions in populated areas of southern Lebanon and the Gaza Strip,¹⁰⁴ and concludes that the IDF was guilty of “indiscriminate” attacks, which demonstrated “Israel’s failure to take all feasible precautions to protect civilians.”¹⁰⁵ Similarly, her 2009 article, under the title “Breaking New Ground: The Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Evolution of International Humanitarian Law,” cites primarily reports and material from Human Rights Watch (25 mentions).¹⁰⁶ In addition to erasing the context of aggression and terror, Docherty’s advocacy publications also omit the counter-arguments that conclude that Israel’s use of these weapons in a war of self-defense are justified under international law.¹⁰⁷

Anna Crowe is the associate director of the clinic. She cooperated in projects with Amnesty International (on the effects of the armed conflict in Syria and Iraq)¹⁰⁸ and the Norwegian Refugee Council¹⁰⁹ (on refugees in Kenya).¹¹⁰ In August 2018, she signed a petition demanding that the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu “stop denying entry to human rights advocates.”¹¹¹ The petition was prompted by Israel’s denial of entry to political activists promoting the boycott (BDS) campaign from several NGOs, including the Center for Constitutional Rights, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch.

Aminta Ossom, a senior instructor in the clinic, was formerly a fellow with Amnesty International.¹¹² Jessica Fjeld is a practitioner-in-residence in the clinic.¹¹³ She signed an open letter to Harvard

¹⁰⁴ https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2024/11/arms1124%20web.pdf, p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2024/11/arms1124%20web.pdf, p. 7.

¹⁰⁶ <https://hrp.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/31.4.docherty.pdf>

¹⁰⁷

<https://theconversation.com/israel-is-accused-of-using-white-phosphorous-would-this-be-against-international-law-219809>

¹⁰⁸

<https://humanitariandisarmament.org/2020/07/31/convention-on-cluster-munitions-celebrates-10th-anniversary-a-living-legacy/>

¹⁰⁹

https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/briefing-notes/kakumas-refugees-freedom-of-movement/hrc_ihrc_movementpass_briefingpaper_aug18.pdf

¹¹⁰ <https://humanrightsclinic.law.harvard.edu/team/anna-crowe/>

¹¹¹

<https://eyewitnesspalestine.org/delegates-in-action-blog/2018/8/14/ccr-letter-release-stop-denying-hr-advocates>

¹¹² <https://humanrightsclinic.law.harvard.edu/team/aminta-ossom/>

¹¹³ <https://humanrightsclinic.law.harvard.edu/team/jessica-fjeld/>

President, Claudine Gay, on October 19, 2023, in which Hamas' actions were described as "self-defense by a people without a state or an army."¹¹⁴

Institutional collaborations

The clinic has a formal collaboration agreement on publications with Human Rights Watch. It also promotes, publishes, and shares this NGO's reports on its website, many of which focus on condemnations of Israel.¹¹⁵

On February 28, 2022, the clinic, together with the organization Addameer (which is linked to the PFLP terror organization), submitted a report to a United Nations commission of inquiry against Israel, accusing the Jewish state of committing "apartheid."¹¹⁶ The submission includes numerous quotes from NGOs such as Yesh Din, B'Tselem, Human Rights Watch, Diakonia, and Adalah.

Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, Kennedy School of Government¹¹⁷

The Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard John F. Kennedy School describes itself as a hub for "research, teaching, and training" in the field of human rights. According to its website, the Center educates students in "human rights policy and practice" and provides "policy-relevant knowledge to international organizations, governments, policymakers, and businesses."¹¹⁸ It was established in 1999 and named after Greg Carr, an entrepreneur and philanthropist who provided the founding gift.¹¹⁹

The Carr Center and its faculty (including fellows) have a number of significant connections with Human Rights Watch (HRW), an influential NGO that is strongly criticized for political bias, departure

¹¹⁴ <https://medium.com/@octoberfacultyletter500/faculty-open-letter-to-president-claudine-gay-ef4c7927c8be>

¹¹⁵

<https://humanrightsclinic.law.harvard.edu/reviewing-the-record-resources-on-incendiary-weapons-from-human-rights-watch-and-the-international-human-rights-clinic-at-harvard-law-school/>

¹¹⁶

<https://hrp.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/IHRC-Addameer-Submission-to-HRC-COI-Apartheid-in-WB.pdf>

¹¹⁷ In 2025, the name was changed from the Carr Center to Carr-Ryan Center.

¹¹⁸ Carr Center for Human Rights Policy. *Harvard Kennedy School Carr Center for Human Rights Policy*. <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/carr>.

¹¹⁹ Russell, J. Hale. "Carr: From business to human rights." *The Harvard Crimson*, October 11, 2002. <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2002/10/11/carr-from-business-to-human-rights/>.

from the principles of universal human rights, and fostering antisemitism.¹²⁰ The links are both personal and institutional, involving a wide range of issues and activities.

Examples include the platforms provided to guest speakers from NGOs and UN agencies who are associated with repeated and highly visible bias towards Israel, under the label of “human rights.” On February 12, 2024, the center hosted a virtual conversation with Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory. Albanese has been condemned by U.S. officials as “unfit for her role.”¹²¹ Members of Congress called for her removal, stating that “her biased behaviors should have no place at the United Nations.”¹²² Then US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield said that the UN “should not tolerate antisemitism from a UN-affiliated official.”¹²³ UN Secretary General Guterres reportedly referred to Albanese as a “horrible person.”¹²⁴ In February 2025, the Netherlands Parliament voted to rescind an invitation to Albanese that had been extended by some members.¹²⁵ (In her Carr Center presentation, she repeatedly labeled the Israeli response in Gaza to the Hamas attacks as “genocide,” described the Palestinian attack on October 7th as “a way to break the occupation, against the apartheid,” and declared that Israeli forces entering the Gaza Strip following October 7th was not legitimate and could not be justified as self-defense).¹²⁶

On February 6, 2025, the Carr Center hosted a webinar titled “In Their Words: Palestinian Perspectives on Fear & Hope in Gaza & the West Bank.”¹²⁷ Speakers included Issa Amro, co-founder and former coordinator of Youth Against Settlements,¹²⁸ and Muhammed Shehada, chief of programmes and

¹²⁰ Haas, Danielle. “The Human-Rights Establishment”, *Sapir Journal*, March 2024
<https://sapirjournal.org/friends-and-foes/2024/03/the-human-rights-establishment/>;

Steinberg, Gerald M. (2020): “Human Rights Watch’s anti-Israel Agenda,” *Israel Affairs*, DOI: [10.1080/13537121.2021.1864847](https://doi.org/10.1080/13537121.2021.1864847); Rubinstein, W. D. (2021). *Watching Human Rights Watch. Quadrant Magazine*. 65(7), 93-95.

¹²¹ <https://x.com/USAmbUN/status/1851354441212928375>.

¹²²

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/congress-members-urge-removal-of-un-official-for-antisemitism-exposed-by-toi/>;
<https://x.com/BradSherman/status/1617727466101182465>;
<https://schneider.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/schneider.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/2022-02-24-final-signed-letter-to-secretary-general-and-high-commissioner-re-sr-albanese.pdf>.

¹²³ <https://x.com/USAmbUN/status/1851354441212928375>.

¹²⁴ <https://jewishinsider.com/2025/01/deborah-lipstadt-antisemitism-envoy-un-albanese-guterres/>

¹²⁵

https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/dutch-parliament-pulls-invite-to-un-investigator-for-the-palestinian-s/

¹²⁶ A conversation with Francesca Albanese. *Harvard Carr Center for Human Rights Policy YouTube Channel*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4kUYrDa1oxo>.

¹²⁷ <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/events/their-words-palestinian-perspectives-fear-hope-gaza-west-bank>

¹²⁸

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2019/03/palestine-authorities-must-drop-charges-against-human-rights-defender-issa-amro-for-peaceful-criticism/>

communications for Euro-Med Monitor,¹²⁹ an NGO whose leaders are linked directly to Hamas.¹³⁰ Shehada has accused Israel of weaponizing the Bibas family,¹³¹ kidnapped on October 7th; claimed that “Israel treats Thai workers as ‘slaves’... & sexually assaulted 100% of them”;¹³² and described sexual violence against Israeli female hostages as “gaslighting.”¹³³

The Carr Center also co-hosted a webinar on November 19, 2024, discussing alleged “attacks, torture, detention, siege, and direct targeting of health workers in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.”¹³⁴ One of the speakers was Milena Ansari, a researcher at HRW and previously employed by Addameer - designated by Israel as an NGO operated by the PFLP terror group.¹³⁵

The most salient aspect of the Carr Center's connection to HRW was the 2023 appointment of Kenneth Roth, who had recently retired as executive director of HRW, as a Senior Fellow at the Center.¹³⁶ Roth's fellowship application was initially vetoed by Professor Douglas Elmendorf, the dean of Harvard Kennedy School, reportedly due to concerns about his bias against Israel in its reporting on human rights.¹³⁷ However, following a major media and pressure campaign, Elmendorf reversed his decision and approved the fellowship for Roth.¹³⁸

¹²⁹ <https://euromedmonitor.org/en/staff>

¹³⁰ <https://ngo-monitor.org/ngos/euro-med-human-rights-monitor/>

¹³¹ <https://zeteo.com/p/is-israel-weaponizing-bibas-children-deaths>

¹³² <https://x.com/muhammadshehad2/status/1885409519246737749>

¹³³ <https://x.com/muhammadshehad2/status/1882826586707415480>

¹³⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QkSLDiCvL9U>

¹³⁵ <https://nbctf.mod.gov.il/en/Pages/211021EN.aspx>.

¹³⁶ People. *Harvard Kennedy School Carr Center for Human Rights Policy*. <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/carr/about/people#faculty-committee>.

¹³⁷ Rosenfeld, Arno. Harvard denies former Human Rights Watch director fellowship over Israel, report says. *Forward*, January 6, 2023. https://forward.com/fast-forward/530827/kenneth-roth-denied-human-rights-watch-fellowship-harvard-israel/?utm_source=iterable; Massing, Michael. Why the godfather of human rights is not welcome at Harvard. *The Nation*, January 5, 2023. <https://www.thenation.com/article/society/hrw-harvard-israel-kennedy-school/>; Mete, Thomas J., and Montgomery, Asher J. After criticism over Roth veto, HKS Dean Elmendorf stresses importance of discussing difficult issues. *The Harvard Crimson*, May 5, 2023. <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/5/5/elmendorf-interview-may-2023/>; Pettit, Emma. A human-rights leader was denied a Harvard post over alleged ‘anti-Israel bias.’ Now a dean faces calls to resign. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 11, 2023. https://www.chronicle.com/article/a-human-rights-leader-was-denied-a-harvard-post-over-alleged-anti-israel-by-as-now-a-dean-faces-calls-to-resign?utm_source=iterable.

¹³⁸ Montgomery, Asher J. “Harvard Kennedy School Dean reverses course, will name Ken Roth Fellow.” *The Harvard Crimson*, January 19, 2023. <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/1/19/elmendorf-roth-reversal/>; Mete, Thomas J. Ken Roth discusses fellowship veto at IOP forum, alleges ‘plenty of pro-Israel tilting’ at Harvard. *The Harvard Crimson*, February 9, 2023. <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/2/9/ken-roth-veto-jfk-forum/>; Herszenhorn, Miles J., and Montgomery, Asher J. “Hundreds call for resignation of Harvard Kennedy School dean accused of blocking fellowship over Israel criticism.” *The Harvard Crimson*, January 11, 2023. <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/1/11/hks-ken-roth-backlash/>.

Roth's nearly three-decade tenure as the head of HRW was marked by numerous scandals, political controversies, and the transformation of the human rights organization into an advocacy tool driven by political motivations.¹³⁹ Roth has faced accusations of fostering a culture at HRW that included antisemitism and prioritized high-profile, politically charged campaigns.¹⁴⁰ In 2009, the founder of HRW, Robert Bernstein, accused Roth of leading the organization away from its mission by disproportionately criticizing Israel, instead of focusing on authoritarian regimes where human rights violations are systemic.¹⁴¹

Roth's biased advocacy, emphasis on ideology in contrast to open debate, and distinctly non-academic spin on human rights and international law became evident from critical social media posts by Harvard students participating in his Israel-Palestine Study Group.¹⁴²

In April 2025 the Carr Center awarded a fellowship position to A. Kayum Ahmed, a former Columbia University assistant professor and Human Rights Watch's Program Lead for the Global Health Initiative (GHI), and, shortly afterwards, the offer was frozen.¹⁴³ The Kennedy School announced that the offer had been made without completing the full review process, and Ahmed claimed that the decision was retaliation against his pro-Palestine views.¹⁴⁴

In July 2024, Columbia University did not renew Ahmed's contract following publicity regarding his teaching and activism in a public health course.¹⁴⁵ Recordings of his lectures revealed that he referred to Israel as a settler-colonial state and claimed that Palestinian issues demonstrate the impacts of colonialism on indigenous populations. After students filed protests stemming from the "indoctrination," Ahmed responded by attacking the students, claiming that they came from "a handful of privileged, white students" who were unaccustomed to critically examining their own privileges within white supremacy and capitalism.

This episode coincided with a number of actions taken by Harvard administrators related to evidence linking some frameworks with antisemitism — including the dismissal of the Center for Middle Eastern

¹³⁹ Gerald M. Steinberg (2020): Human Rights Watch's anti-Israel Agenda, *Israel Affairs*, DOI: [10.1080/13537121.2021.1864847](https://doi.org/10.1080/13537121.2021.1864847)

¹⁴⁰ Danielle Haas, <https://sapijournal.org/friends-and-foes/2024/03/the-human-rights-establishment/>; <https://ngo-monitor.org/danielle-haas-email-to-hrw-staffers-november-16-2023/>

¹⁴¹ Bernstein, Robert L. Rights watchdog, lost in the Mideast. *The New York Times*. October 19, 2009. <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/20/opinion/20bernstein.html>.

¹⁴² <https://x.com/NoaMargalitH/status/1842198639256691035>

¹⁴³ <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2025/4/24/hks-revokes-fellowship/>

¹⁴⁴

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/a-kayum-ahmed-67138135_update-harvard-just-withdrew-my-carr-ryan-activit-y-7320874590094671873-BTAF?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAALQDZgBxRBC8FVWunLPg-aHeFjpg0hDqrQ

¹⁴⁵

<https://www.wsj.com/us-news/education/some-columbia-professors-accused-of-pro-palestinian-indoctrination-02013fc>
<https://www.columbiaspectator.com/news/2024/04/04/mailman-professor-abdul-kayum-ahmed-to-receive-letter-of-nonrenewal-following-claims-of-political-indoctrination/>

Studies' director in March.¹⁴⁶ The Carr Center's, as well as its director, Mathias Risse's, pro-Palestinian bias was cited in a White House letter to Harvard on April 11, 2025, which listed the Carr Center as one of the University groups responsible for "fuel[ing] antisemitic harassment or reflect[ing] ideological capture."¹⁴⁷

Finally, one of the members of the Center's advisory board is Loubna Freih,¹⁴⁸ who also serves on the governing board of HRW.¹⁴⁹ Freih's association with HRW goes at least as far back as 2001, including heading their Geneva office and Beirut branch.¹⁵⁰ Her brief biography on the HRW website states that she was "born in Iraq, of Saudi origin," and played an active role in the creation of the UN Human Rights Council in 2005¹⁵¹—a body that has been widely denounced, including by two UN Secretaries-General, the EU, Canada, and the US, for its disproportionate focus on Israel.¹⁵² Whether Freih is also associated with donor relations and fundraising for both organizations remains to be examined.

Implications and Recommendations

This case study documents the extensive links to political advocacy NGOs in Harvard University frameworks related to human rights that prominently promote one-sided anti-Israel ideological agendas. The relationships with this NGO network involve faculty members, publications, visitors and fellows, speakers programs, course offerings, student counseling and job or internship placements.

Highly toxic entirely one-sided and politicized NGO reports and agendas have been adopted and endorsed by faculty members, fellows, graduate students and others associated with the university frameworks.

¹⁴⁶ <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2025/3/29/harvard-cmes-director-departure/>

¹⁴⁷

<https://www.harvard.edu/research-funding/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2025/04/Letter-Sent-to-Harvard-2025-04-11.pdf>

¹⁴⁸ Carr Center Advisory Board. *Harvard Kennedy School Carr Center for Human Rights Policy*. <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/carr/about/carr-center-advisory-board>.

¹⁴⁹ Board of Directors. *Human Rights Watch*. <https://www.hrw.org/about/people/board-directors>.

¹⁵⁰ "Loubna Freih - mountain goat." *The Princess Charlene of Monaco Foundation*. <https://pcmfsa.com/loubna-freih/>.

¹⁵¹ Loubna Freih. *Human Rights Watch*. <https://www.hrw.org/about/people/loubna-freih>.

¹⁵² Ban Ki-moon criticizes UN Human Rights Council for singling Israel out. *Reuters*, June 21, 2007. <https://www.haaretz.com/2007-06-21/ty-article/ban-ki-moon-criticizes-un-human-rights-council-for-singling-israel-out/000017f-f7fd-d044-adff-f7fd480000>; Lazaroff, Tovah. Britain gives UNHRC six months to cease anti-Israel bias. *The Jerusalem Post*, June 18, 2018. <https://www.jpost.com/International/Britain-warns-UNHRC-Stop-the-bias-or-well-vote-against-anti-Israel-560274>; Lazaroff, Tovah. Clinton: UNHRC bias against Israel undermines its work. *The Jerusalem Post*. February 28, 2011. <https://www.jpost.com/diplomacy-and-politics/clinton-unhrc-bias-against-israel-undermines-its-work>.

These activities, in turn, have contributed significantly to the antisemitism that is documented in detail by Harvard University's Presidential Task Force on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias.¹⁵³ Among the instances cited in this document, many originate in the School of Public Health's FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, as well as from programs sponsored by and under the supervision of the Law School.

The numerous examples highlight the ease with which advocacy NGOs, personnel and their products are accepted and incorporated into academic frameworks, ignoring and erasing norms such as open and critical debate, ideological neutrality, independent verifiability of empirical claims, and peer review.

The frequent platforming of NGO political activists as "experts" and granting them fellowships and visiting positions despite the blatant bias and absence of academic credentials, as in the case of Carr Center and Ken Roth, further erode the important distinctions.

Based on this documentation and analysis, we recommend that Harvard, as well as other universities, formally examine and consider the implications of extensive institutional relationships involving advocacy NGOs with respect to academic norms. To the degree that NGO involvement inhibits critical thought, open debate, political neutrality, and research based on independently verifiable empirical data, these relationships should not be entered into routinely, but with a high degree of caution.

¹⁵³ Harvard University, "FINAL REPORT Presidential Task Force on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias." April 29, 2025. <https://www.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/FINAL-Harvard-ASAIB-Report-4.29.25.pdf>

Alphabetical Index of NGOs named in this report, with links and brief descriptions

* Indicates NGO linked to PFLP network

NAME OF NGO AND LINKS TO NGO MONITOR ENTRY	LOCATION (COUNTRY)	UNIVERSITY PROGRAM	CORE ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES VS ISRAEL
Adalah	Israel	Harvard: FXB Center for Health & Human Rights	Promotes allegations of Israeli “ethnic cleansing,” “apartheid” and “war crimes.”
Addameer (Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association)*	Palestinian	Harvard: FXB Center for Health & Human Rights; Law School - IHRC; Carr Center	Designated by Israel as PFLP-linked terror front ¹⁵⁴ ; campaigns for Palestinians held by Israel for terrorism; advocacy includes “collective punishment,” “war crimes,” “ethnic cleansing,” “apartheid” “genocide.”
Al Haq *	Palestinian	Harvard: FXB	Designated by Israel as PFLP-linked terror front; ¹⁵⁵ accusations of “lawfare,” genocide, apartheid and BDS campaigns
Al-Shabaka	US	Harvard: FXB Center for Health & Human Rights	Accusations of “ethnic cleansing,” “apartheid,” “genocide,” “collective punishment,” and “war crimes,” supporting a Palestinian “right of return.”
Amnesty International	UK	Harvard: FXB Center for Health & Human Rights; Law School IHRC	“Apartheid,” “genocide” war crimes, etc labels, campaigns for arms embargo vs Israel, etc.
Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem (ARIJ)	Palestinian	Harvard: FXB Center for Health & Human Rights	BDS, “apartheid” “racism;” “ethnic cleansing,” “transfer,” “land grab,” “colonialization”; support for a Palestinian “right of return”
BADIL	Palestinian	Harvard: FXB Center for Health & Human Rights	Founded to promote a Palestinian “right of return;” BDS campaigns, accusations of “apartheid,” “ethnic cleansing,” “war crimes,” “colonization,” and “racism.”

¹⁵⁴ <https://nbctf.mod.gov.il/en/Pages/211021EN.aspx>

¹⁵⁵ <https://nbctf.mod.gov.il/en/Pages/211021EN.aspx>

B'tselem	Israel		Accuses Israel of “apartheid,” perpetrating “war crimes,” “beating and abus[ing]” Palestinians, “demolition of [Palestinian] houses as punishment,” and forced “deportations.”
CCR - Center for Constitutional Rights	US	Harvard: FXB Center for Health & Human Rights	Lawfare vs Israel and Israeli officials; promotes BDS; arms embargo vs. Israel; accusations of “war crimes” and “crimes against humanity.”
Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN)	US	Harvard: FXB's Palestine Program for Health and Human Rights	Lawfare; lobbies the US government and international legal frameworks; filed a communication with the ICC accusing Biden and Blinken of "genocide."
Diakonia	Sweden	Harvard: Law School - IHRC	
Doctors Against Genocide	US (Michigan)	Harvard: FXB Center for Health & Human Rights	Pro-Palestinian political advocacy NGO
Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor	Switzerland	Harvard: Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, Kennedy School of Government	NGO led by Palestinians alleged by Israel to be linked to Hamas; no publicly available information on its budget or funding sources; blood libels and conspiracy theories; “apartheid,” genocide,” “ethnic cleansing,” “collective punishment,” and “war crimes.”
Foundation for Middle East Peace	US	Harvard: FXB's Palestine Program for Health and Human Rights	Grants to a number of highly biased advocacy NGOs promoting antisemitic rhetoric; some with alleged ties to the PFLP. Accusations of “apartheid,” “collective punishment,” and “war crimes.”
Gisha	Israel	Harvard: FXB Center for Health & Human Rights	Accuses Israel of developing “a complex system of rules and sanctions” to block Palestinian “freedom of movement” violating “basic rights... including the right to life, the right to access medical care....”
Human Rights Watch	US	Harvard: FXB Center for Health & Human Rights	Promotes agenda of Israeli war crimes, violations of IHL,” genocide, apartheid, deliberate starvation, etc.

Jerusalem Legal and Human Rights Centre	Palestinian	Harvard: FXB Center for Health & Human Rights	Highly active in promoting BDS campaigns, lobbying international bodies, and utilizing highly inflammatory rhetoric such as “collective punishment,” “ethnic cleansing,” and “apartheid,” as well as supporting a Palestinian “right of return.”
Médecins Sans Frontières	France	Harvard: FXB Center for Health & Human Rights	“collective punishment,” “indiscriminate bombings,” and “wholesale massacres;” denied Hamas use of Gaza hospitals
Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP)	UK	Harvard: FXB’s Palestine Program for Health and Human Rights	UK Palestinian political advocacy NGO; accusations of “indiscriminate attacks,” “collective punishment.”
Norwegian People’s Aid	Norway	Harvard: FXB Center for Health & Human Rights	“apartheid,” “collective punishment,” “war crimes,” and “violations of international law and human rights;” supports claims of Palestinian “right of return.”
Norwegian Refugee Council	Norway	Harvard: Law School, IHRC	Promotes Palestinian refugee claims, accuses Israel of starvation, war crimes and blood libels
Oxfam	UK	Harvard: FXB Center for Health & Human Rights	Promotes claims of “intentional starvation” and campaigns for arms embargo vs. Israel; numerous publications and social media posts repeating anti-Israel advocacy
Palestine Children Relief Fund (PCRF)	USA	Harvard: FXB Center for Health & Human Rights	Promotes narratives of Israeli aggression and systematically erases Palestinian terror attacks against Israeli civilians.
Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) *	Gaza	Harvard: FXB Center for Health & Human Rights	Nakba narrative; “apartheid,” “ethnic cleansing,” “war crimes,” “Judaization of Jerusalem” “collective punishment”
Physicians for Human Rights Israel	Israel	Harvard: FXB Center for Health & Human Rights	Claims medical expertise, promotes demonization including claims of “apartheid and colonialism”

Save the Children	UK	Harvard: FXB Center for Health & Human Rights	Campaigns promoting accusations of IDF attacks on children, seeks to include the IDF on the UN blacklist of “grave violators,” advocates for an arms embargo against Israel and has perpetrated accusations of “Starvation.”
Yesh Din	Israel	Harvard Law School: IHRC	Accuses IDF and political leadership of systematic crimes, based on unverifiable “reports;” campaigns against IHRA working definition of antisemitism
+972	Israel	Harvard: FXB’s Palestine Program for Health and Human Rights	Contributors accuse Israel of “apartheid”, “ethnic cleansing,” “perpetrating another Nakba, “American Jewish hypocrisy,” etc