

Executive Board decision on advice Human Rights Advisory Committee

31 October 2025

Last year, Maastricht University developed a UM Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) Framework, to help make an informed assessment of our institutional strategic partners' involvement in international crimes and/or serious human rights violations. The framework, which was approved in March 2025, was developed in close collaboration with the UM community, the deans of the faculties, and the University Council.

According to our HRDD Framework, the HRDD assessment is applied to institutional strategic partnerships (ISPs). According to the Framework, an institutional strategic partnership is defined as a partnership where the Executive Board or Faculty Board needs to agree upon the partnership that transcends individual collaborative activities between academics, often including strategic university and/or faculty strategic objectives and that is formalised through a contract signed by the Executive Board or Faculty Board. ISPs may include formalised UM-wide participation in academic networks, faculty-to-faculty partnerships, commercial partnerships, and partnerships on student and staff exchange.

As indicated in the HRDD Framework, the HRDD assessment does not focus on *individual academic collaboration*, such as one-to-one joint research projects (whether or not within externally co-funded consortia), joint publications, individual guest lectures, and individual consultancies. This decision, jointly taken after close consultation with the UM community, was taken to guarantee academic freedom as a fundamental pillar of our university's values. Overall, Maastricht University continuously strives to find a balance between the importance of academic collaboration (and the benefits it can bring to academia and science diplomacy) and academic freedom on the one hand, and adherence to human rights considerations on the other.

On 1 April 2025, we have established a Human Rights Advisory Committee (HRAC). The committee has been asked to evaluate:

- Whether there are serious indications that international crimes and/or serious violations of human rights are taking place in a specific country in which an institutional strategic partner is located;
- When there are serious indications that international crimes and/or serious violations of human rights are committed in a country by state or non-state actors: to evaluate whether there are serious indications that our institutional strategic partners in this country are involved in international crimes and/or serious violations of human rights; and
- To formulate an advice on our institutional strategic partnerships in three pilot countries.

At the start of its work, the committee began with an assessment of Israel and Sudan. The choice of Israel and Sudan as the first pilot countries was made based on the fact that these countries' human rights situations are highlighted as worrisome in the *Today's Armed Conflicts Index* of the Geneva Academy, and on the fact that UM has an institutional strategic partnership there.

In anticipation of the HRDD assessment process, already in Spring 2024, [UM froze](#) its existing institutional strategic cooperation with institutions in Israel and decided not to enter into any new institutional strategic partnerships with Israeli partners. Maastricht University has no institutional strategic partnerships in Palestine.

UM Institutional strategic partners

In Israel, UM has one institutional strategic partnership:

1. Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJI)

This partnership, in place since 2017, involves a collaboration between Maastricht University's Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience (FPN) and the HUJI Department of Psychology in the form of a student exchange agreement.

In Sudan, UM has one institutional strategic partnership:

1. Ahfad University for Women (AUW)

This partnership, based on longstanding links between UM and UAW staff since the 1980s, involves collaboration between Maastricht University's Faculty of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences (FHML) and Ahfad University for Women (and other universities) within a joint degree programme, the MSc in Global Health. Within this collaboration, there is joint teaching of courses by UM and UAW staff, and a student exchange between the nine joint degree partners. The student exchange with AUW is currently dormant as AUW's campus in Khartoum is deserted and safe travel to Sudan is not possible. The shared education and research work continues.

In Summer 2025, the committee has developed its advice, and – according to our HRDD Framework –, the committee's draft advice has been shared with the partner institutions to give them the opportunity to respond and share their views.

Advice Human Rights Advisory Committee on Israel and Sudan

At the end of October 2025, the committee has submitted its advice to the Executive Board. The committee advises the following:

ISRAEL

Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJI)

The committee's advice is to:

1. Suspend the current institutional strategic partnership with HUJI and begin no new partnerships, until certain conditions are met.

While the committee acknowledges some positive actions undertaken by the university to protect human rights, and the fact that HUJI is currently operating under very challenging circumstances, it concludes that HUJI as an institution is currently indirectly involved in serious human rights violations, war crimes and/or international crimes being committed by the Israeli government, because of HUJI's involvement with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), its archeological project in the West Bank, and the presentation of a one-sided narrative that supports the international crimes being committed by the Israeli government.

2. Inform HUJI that the partnership is suspended and share the HRAC reports (for phases 1 and 2) with HUJI leadership.
3. Inform HUJI that UM would consider restarting the partnership if it:
 - a. Ends all archeological projects in the West Bank.

- b. Ends all collaboration with the Israeli military (IDF), for as long as the IDF is committing serious human rights violations, war crimes and/or international crimes.
- c. Ends the special treatment of reserve soldiers who are also students by providing them with financial support and credit reduction, as long as the IDF is committing serious human rights violations, war crimes and/or international crimes.
- d. Publicly distances itself from the crimes being committed by the Israeli government in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

This advice can be reconsidered:

- a. Upon request by the University Board or Faculty leadership (there is a proponent);
 - b. In pursuit of a future strategic agreement (there is a concrete goal);
 - c. If the situation in Israel/Palestine has fundamentally improved or there is concrete evidence that HUJI has taken steps aligned with our expectations (there is a concrete change in the situation).
4. Make the phase 1 and 2 reports public so that all UM staff and students considering collaboration with HUJI are properly informed.
 5. Consider stopping outgoing students going to HUJI, while continuing to open our doors to *incoming students* as part of this student exchange. This would make it possible for HUJI students to be exposed to alternative narratives and education at UM, and be a signal that all students are welcome and that we do not hold them responsible for the crimes of their government and/or university.

SUDAN

Ahfad University for Women (AUW)

The committee's advice is to:

- Continue our collaboration with Ahfad University for Women, as UAW is clearly not engaged in any activities that would draw concern under the HRDD framework. AUW staff not only work to keep education running under the most difficult circumstances, but also actively speak out and act in defense of actual and potential victims and should be considered a force for good in this conflict.
- Highlight Ahfad University for Women's work as a role model and publicly showcase the university as a desirable partner.
- Support the work at Ahfad University for Women within the context of the Global Health Consortium, for example through:
 - offering staff mobility scholarships, access to equipment or resources to AUW staff to work at UM while they are displaced by the violence,
 - offering opportunities for students of Ahfad University for Women who may be able to come to Maastricht to pursue their studies even though the exchange is presently dormant, voiding the need for reciprocity, and
 - offering safe harbour to those affected by the violence in Sudan;
- Study the work of Ahfad University for Women, especially their innovative use of technologies in compensation to the conflict, as a cases of didactic advancements.

Executive Board decisions

Based on the advice of the Human Rights Assessment Committee, and in consultation with the deans, the Executive Board has taken the following decisions.

ISRAEL

Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The Executive Board decides to follow the committee's advice, and:

1. Suspend the institutional strategic partnership with Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and do not start any new partnerships until certain conditions have been met.
2. Terminate the UM (FPN) student exchange agreement with Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJI).
3. Reinstating this partnership, or starting a new institutional strategic partnership with HUJI can be considered when the following conditions have been met:
 - Ending cooperation between HUJI and IDF in the Havatzalot program, for as long as there are serious indications of IDF's involvement in international crimes and/or serious violations of human rights.*
 - Ending cooperation between HUJI and IDF in the Talpiot program, as long as there are serious indications of IDF's involvement in international crimes and/or serious violations of human rights.
 - A positive decision by the Executive Board to restart the partnership with HUJI, following a new HRDD assessment by the committee.

* While the recent ceasefire offers hope for the future, the current state of the ceasefire agreement is so precarious that it is too soon to be able to conclude whether any structural change, in particular in the role of the Israeli army, is guaranteed.

The Executive Board decision is based on two grounds:

1. The very close cooperation between HUJI and IDF in the Havatzalot programme, which trains military for employment in the IDF's Intelligence Directorate. The students are both soldiers in the IDF and participate in the programme armed and in uniform. HUJI's course offerings are part of a broader curriculum, that also includes combat training and military leadership training.
2. The close cooperation between HUJI and IDF in the Talpiot programme, aimed at training students in military technology. The programme is led by the Israeli Ministry of Defence.

It is plausible that HUJI, through its significant role in both programmes, contributes to international crimes and serious violations of human rights committed by the Israeli government, as presented in the *HRDD Phase 1 Country Assessment Report Israel/Palestine*.

Given the nature and intensity of this cooperation – training significant numbers of military officers for leadership roles in areas crucial to warfare, such as intelligence gathering and military technology – this is a direct and specific involvement. Because the involvement is direct and specific, this justifies suspending the strategic partnership with HUJI, regardless of the nature of the cooperation within this ISP.

In concrete terms, the decision taken by the Executive Board today means that our institutional strategic partnership with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem is suspended and the exchange program is terminated.

SUDAN

Ahfad University for Women

The Executive Board decides to follow the committee's advice, and decides to:

1. Continue our collaboration with Ahfad University for Women, as it is a university defending human rights in difficult circumstances.
2. Ask the Dean of FHML to consider (i) in which ways it would be possible to strengthen our collaboration with Ahfad University for Women (AUW) in order to support this partner in safeguarding knowledge or academics, and (ii) to consider what we can learn from AUW's innovative use of didactic technologies, and (iii) to discuss possibilities with the Ahfad University President.