

Indian universities establish deeper ties with Israeli institutions amid Gaza war

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The file photo shows a delegation from Hebrew University, which included Oron Shagrir, the vice president for international affairs at the institution (pictured on the left), pay a visit to the

New Delhi, July 11 (RHC)-- Indian universities have strengthened research collaborations with Israeli academic institutions and military companies amid Western universities reconsidering their partnership with Tel-Aviv after pro-Gaza protests around the United States and Europe called for Israeli disinvestment.

A Monday report by the Middle East Eye has revealed that Indian universities have recently expanded collaboration in defense, robotics, and artificial intelligence (AI), with Israeli universities suspected to be involved in the ongoing Gaza war.

Ever since the International Court of Justice (ICJ) found that Israel may be committing genocide in Gaza, Indian universities have engaged in over twelve meetings, workshops, and agreements with Israeli universities and weapons companies, the report revealed.

Experts suggest that these agreements may be a strategic move by Israel to tap into India's university system in order to meet its increasing demand for military equipment and technological advancements.

This also allows Israel to broaden its network of partnerships, especially in light of calls for boycotts and divestments from Israeli institutions and conflicts. After Israel launched its genocidal war in Gaza on October 7, India emerged as among the first supporters of Israel's military actions in Gaza.

The growing cooperation comes as Prime Minister Narendra Modi has come back to office for his third term. Under his leadership, India-Israel relations saw an unprecedented boost in trade and partnership in various spheres.

Following his trip to the Palestinian occupied territories in 2017, a significant boost was seen in institutional ties. Several MoUs were also signed between different Indian and Israeli academic institutions during the Indian president's visit in 2015. The efforts to establish academic connections have been under way ever since.

Israel's ongoing bilateral endeavors to enhance academic collaboration involve the advancement of studies on India and Israel as fields of study at different universities, as well as the promotion of institutional connections through collaborative research initiatives, scholarships, student enrollment, and faculty/student exchange programs.

Israel's attempts to enhance academic collaboration come as the regime's ongoing brutal war on the Gaza Strip has taken a heavy toll on the territory's education sector, raising calls for divestment of any companies that were benefiting financially from the war in Gaza that began last October.

"You can't destroy the entire educational system in Gaza and then expect to have normal academic exchanges," Nandini Sundar, a Delhi-based sociologist professor, told MEE.

"Any university, institution or individual who partners with Israel at this time should be considered complicit in the genocide," Sundar added.

Palestinians have long contended that Israeli universities have been instrumental in the continuation of the Israeli occupation, particularly by promoting the regime's military strategies and technology.

A new report reveals that an Indian conglomerate has exported Hermes drones to Israel, very similar to those extensively used in Israel's military campaign in Gaza, which have resulted in the death of over 28,300 people, including at least 12,300 children.

Among the Indian universities partnering with the apartheid regime are some which have begun collaborating with Israeli military firms or Indian companies believed to have supplied arms to Israel.

During March, Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), a significant manufacturer of military and commercial aerospace and military systems in Israel, and a complicit in the Israeli bombardment of Gaza, entered into an agreement with IIT-Delhi, which was characterized as "a strategic partnership" between the two entities, at a time when the death toll in Gaza had surpassed 32,500.

IAI said the relationship would "demonstrate a shared vision leveraging research to drive progress and technological excellence, shaping together the future of technology in India." In November 2023, IAI inked a \$1.2 billion agreement to provide air defense systems to Israel's military amid the Gaza war.

Moreover, the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras on Monday revealed its collaboration with Israel Tel Aviv University to introduce a water quality course designed to educate people on water issues.

This came amid pro-Palestine protests spreading to institutions across the globe, and furthering the movement from that was initiated in the US to the UK, Australia and even India.

Back in May, more than 400 students and 39 faculty members at Ashoka University, located in the outskirts of Delhi, endorsed a petition urging the university's leadership to end its affiliation with Tel Aviv University.

The students at the university used their convocation ceremony to draw attention to Gaza and the institutions' complicity in the war on Gaza, as they wore keffiyehs and carried placards that read "Free Palestine," "Stop Genocide," and "Cut Ties Now."

Alongside the events unfolding at Ashoka University, a large group of students at the National Academy of Legal Studies and Research (NALSAR) in Hyderabad urged the administration to cut off ties with Tel Aviv University and the Harry Radzyner School of Law in Herzliya.

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