

We, members of the academic community in Israel and abroad, representing a wide range of disciplines, wish to protest recent developments that are taking place at Tel Aviv University with the full knowledge of the university administration. We understand that an agreement has been signed between representatives of TAU and the Israel Antiquities Authority, according to which the Institute of Archaeology will conduct excavations in the village of Silwan in Palestinian East Jerusalem. These excavations are funded at least in part by the Elad Foundation, which has legal control over the area called “City of David National Park.”

The express intention of this Foundation is to “Judaize” Silwan by gaining control, through purchase or other means, of houses there and by planting colonies of Israeli settlers, under armed guard, in the neighborhood. Elad also funds and oversees archaeological excavations and development of the National Park in Silwan as part of its ultra-nationalist program.

The public nature of archaeological activity at this site, which is carried out in the open with direct impact on the lives of the Palestinian residents of the area, has spurred international bodies-- among them ICOMOS, the body that advises UNESCO on the subject of preservation and heritage, and which includes an Israeli representative-- to re-affirm that any professional intervention in a densely inhabited heritage site requires the cooperation of the local residents. In the absence of such cooperation, archaeological excavation in a built-up area becomes a one-sided, arbitrary governmental act and fails to meet the basic requirements of academic research.

The planned excavation in Silwan will ostensibly take place in an area designated as a “National Park,” but it is adjacent to—only a few dozen meters away from—the homes of local residents and forms part of the general ideological project of the Elad Foundation. Excavations in this area are conducted under heavy protection by the Border Police and privately contracted security forces.

Apart from the direct, deleterious impact of these excavations on the lives of the local residents, Tel Aviv University is about to enter indirectly into partnership with an extremist political organization—thereby establishing a *de facto* position on an issue that is at the center of crucial debate within Israel, with serious political and moral implications. In entering into such a partnership, Tel Aviv University

will be granting the Elad Foundation the professional recognition it seeks, recognition that academic institutions in Israel and abroad have thus far refused to grant.

We appeal to the administration of Tel Aviv University out of deep concern over its unseemly participation in such a project, involving one of its academic units in political activity camouflaged as an academic enterprise. This action will have an inevitable impact on the international reputation of scientific research in Israel—within and beyond the field of archaeology.

At this time of increasing threats to the freedom of research in Israel, it is imperative that academic research remain untainted by overt political agendas. We therefore ask that the administration of Tel Aviv University direct the members of the Institute of Archaeology to desist immediately from their connection, direct or indirect, with the Elad Foundation and from any project that is funded, partly or in whole, by that foundation.

Sincerely,

Prof. Aleida Assmann, University of Konstanz

Prof. Jan Assman, University of Heidelberg, University of Konstanz

Prof. Bernard Avishai, Dartmouth College

Prof. Anita S. Barrows, The Wright Institute, Berkeley, California

Dr. Louise Bethlehem, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Prof. Kalman Bland, Duke University

Prof. Chana Bloch, Mills College

Prof. Donald Bloxham, School of History, Classics and Archaeology, University of Edinburgh

Prof. Janice Boddy, University of Toronto

Dr. Ellen Cantarow, Journalist

Prof. Joseph H. Carens, University of Toronto

Prof. Naomi Chazan, Hebrew University and Dean, School of Government and Society, the Academic College of Tel-Aviv-Yaffo, former MK

Prof. Mark Cohen, Princeton University

Prof. Alon Confino, University of Virginia

Prof. Edwin Daniel, FRSC (Fellow Royal Society of Fellows, Canada), University of Alberta

Prof. Chandler Davis, University of Toronto

Prof. Natalie Zemon Davis, Princeton University; University of Toronto
Prof. Hent de Vries, Johns Hopkins University
Prof. Michael Dietler, University of Chicago (Archaeology)
Prof. Wendy Doniger, University of Chicago
Prof. Debórah Dwork, Clark University
Prof. Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Prof. Yaron Ezrahi, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Prof. Anita Clair Fellman, Old Dominion University
Prof. Peter Fitting, University of Toronto
Prof. Clive Foss, Georgetown University
Marcia Freedman, Former Member of Knesset
Dr. Elizabeth Freund, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Prof. Susan Gal, University of Chicago
Prof. Luca Giuliani, Rektor, Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (Archaeology)
Dr. Amos Goldberg, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Prof. Barry Goldensohn, Skidmore College
Prof. Anthony Grafton, Princeton University, Balzan Prize Recipient
Marilyn Hacker, Chancellor, Academy of American Poets
Prof. Ian Hacking, Philosopher, University of Toronto, Companion of the Order of Canada
Prof. Ruth HaCohen, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Prof. Andras Hamori, Princeton University
Prof. Peter Hilman, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Prof. Galit Hasan-Rokem, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Holland Hendrix, President Emeritus, Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York
Prof. John Haldon, Princeton University
Prof. Gerald Hawting, Oxford
Dr. Judith Herrin, King's College, London
Prof. Neil Hertz, Johns Hopkins University
Prof. Susannah Heschel, Dartmouth College
Prof. Barbara Hochman, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
Prof. Baruch Hochman, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Prof. Zvi Jagendorf, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Prof. Michael Lambek, FRSC, Chair, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto
Professor Richard Borshay Lee, University of Toronto
Prof. Stanley Lewis, University of Oxford
Prof. Avishai Margalit, Institute of Advanced Studies, Princeton University

Prof. McKim Marriott, University of Chicago
Prof. Michael Meltsner, Northeastern University
Prof. Anita Mittwoch, Hebrew University
Prof. Ralph Nicholas, University of Chicago
Prof. David Nirenberg, University of Chicago
Prof. Alicia Ostriker, Rutgers University
Prof. Jerry Ostriker, astrophysicist, Columbia University, former provost of Princeton
Prof. Elaine H. Pagels, Princeton University, MacArthur Fellow
Prof. Ilana Pardes, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Prof. Derek J. Penslar, FRSC, University of Toronto, Oxford University
Prof. Sheldon Pollock, Columbia University
Prof. David S. Powers, Cornell University
Prof. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Prof. Marshall Sahlins, University of Chicago
Professor Jyotirmaya Sarma, University of Hyderabad
Prof. Robert Schneider, University of Indiana, editor, *American Historical Review*
Prof. Seth Schwartz, Columbia University
Prof. Joan Wallach Scott, Princeton Institute for Advanced Study
Prof. David Shulman, Hebrew University, MacArthur Fellow
Prof. Dina Stein, University of Haifa
Prof. Zeev Sternhell, Hebrew University; Fellow, The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities
Prof. Ann Laura Stoler, New School for Social Research
Prof. Russell Tuttle, University of Chicago
Prof. Alan Walmsley, University of Copenhagen (Archaeology)
Professor Michael Wayne, University of Toronto
Professor Abraham Udovitch, Princeton
Professor Lucette Valensi, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris
Prof. Christian Wedemeyer, University of Chicago
Prof. Donald Whitcomb, University of Chicago
Professor Chris Wickham, Oxford
C.K. Williams, poet, Princeton University
Prof. Samuel Zacks, University of Toronto