

weekend

Iran and Russia" inside, Israel outside": **the student organization that dumped Israel**

Demonstration of medical staff members
against the war in Gaza, in Dublin, in April.
"Expulsion from a junior student organization
also has a great significance for the image of
"Israel and of Israeli and Jewish doctors
Photo: Stringer/Anadolu via Reuters Con

**Without documentation, without many of the voters hearing
Israel's arguments and without official reasoning, this month**

the Israeli delegation was suspended from the International Federation of Medical Students - while Russia, Iran, and Syria remained members of it Israel in the world

Ronnie Linder

Email notifications 

August 16, 2024 • 06:22

After everything was over, and the representatives of the medical students from around the world had finished voting on August 6 in favor of the proposal to suspend the Israeli association from the International Federation of Medical Students IFMSA, the final humiliation came: "The proposal was approved and the participants burst into jubilation," says Miri Schwimmer, chairperson of the student association for Medicine in Israel (Hasri) and the President of Israel in the World Federation. "Then they told us, the two Israelis, to collect our things and fly away, and made it clear to us that we are not entitled to participate in ".the rest of the conference

It was a humiliating position, but not very surprising. This moment was preceded by days and months of bullying towards the Israeli representatives in the organization and

increasingly escalating rhetoric towards Israel. The attempts of the Israeli representatives to make their voices heard, to oppose the statements and moves directed against them and to demand due process and an investigation before the impeachment - were met with a wall in the form of contempt, turning their backs, .accusations and even a boycott

The removal of the Israeli association from the World Federation of Medical Students is seemingly a small story, almost marginal in terms of its impact in the real world. The International Federation of Medical Student Associations is a non-political and independent organization that represents more than 1.5 million medical students from 136 countries. This is not an organization that directly affects the life of the medical student or the State of Israel, and the sanctions will not be felt directly. However, the sequence of events that led to the decision should turn on all possible red lights regarding Israel's dismal situation in the world in general, and in the academic-medical world in .particular

As soon as people found out I was from" Israel, they didn't talk to me and didn't agree to shake my hand. You have to remember that these are medical students and an apolitical organization. Then we found out that rumors were spreading about us that ".we were Mossad agents and IDF soldiers

Garrick Hoichman and Miri Schwimmer at the IFMSA conference in Malta, in April

In retrospect, the early signs were there much earlier. "Since the corona virus, Israel has not shown enough presence in the international organization. Last year I was elected chairman of the association in Israel and I decided to send a delegation on our behalf to the organization's events," says Schwimmer, a medical student at Ariel University. The first conference she went to was a year ago, even before the massacre and the war. Already there she .felt the numerical inferiority and a hostile atmosphere

I was the only representative from Israel, and other" countries came with delegations of 8-10 people. The Palestinian delegation came with a composition of 20 people," she says. "A considerable number of the representatives from Arab countries boycotted me as an Israeli, one of them took a picture with me and was later severely criticized, but slowly important interpersonal relationships were also formed and along with the hostility there was an ice breaker. I am active and volunteer in many organizations, including trips to refugee camps in Ukraine, and this Helped me crack the narrative against Israel a ".little

Trying to fight backfired on the doctors

Then came October 7th. The chairman of the world organization, a medical student from Greece, published the flag of Palestine in her story that same day. The organization of Palestinian medical students, whose logo is a map of the complete Land of Israel from the river to the sea, published a long message the day after the massacre

in which it accused Israel of 70 years of Ethnic cleansing,
.land theft and massacre of Palestinians

Regarding the massacre itself, the message states: "The
Palestinian resistance succeeded in taking control of illegal
settlements in the Gaza Envelope as well as military
vehicles and tanks patrolling the area... According to the
UN resolution, the Palestinians have the legitimacy to free
themselves from colonialist control by all available means,
including armed struggle." In addition, they called on the
international community to "raise a voice and take action
".against Israel

This was just the beginning: the international organization's
official account on Facebook and Instagram published a
post comparing Israel's actions in Gaza to the Holocaust,
and at the same time various officials in the organization,
medical students who represent their colleagues in the
various countries, published anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic
content. A senior official in the organization published an
anti-Semitic cartoon in which Binyamin Netanyahu is seen
putting the Palestinian flag into the crematorium above
which is the famous sign from Auschwitz "Labor liberates".

Another senior official wrote in a story: "Israel has no right to exist." One of the senior officials of the international organization, who lives in Nablus, published in stories .calling for the genocide of all Israelis

The post that compared Israel's actions in Gaza to the Holocaust and was published on the official IFMSA account on Facebook and Instagram, before it was removed

Photo: from Instagram

The Israeli organization tried to fight back - and demanded the dismissal of the senior official along with an official condemnation of the October 7 attack. "They didn't open an investigation against him, because those who were supposed to investigate him independently are his friends," says Schwimmer. "The issue ended with an explanatory email from his side." At the same time, Schwimmer sent letters to all student union leaders, trying to explain Israel's .position and present the massacres, rape and kidnapping

However, most of these moves were not only unsuccessful, but even turned against the Israelis: "On October 17 - three hours after the explosion at El Ahli Hospital in the Zeyton neighborhood, which Israel was blamed for but it turned out in retrospect to have been caused by a failed rocket

launch towards Israel - the international organization issued a statement , implying that Israel is to blame and relying on initial reports only. Even though we appealed to them several times and said it had already been refuted by many international authorities, they did not change the message," says Garik Hoychman, a medical student at the Hebrew University and an activist in the Israel Defense .Forces

The attempts to argue against the post of the senior official in the organization who called for genocide and to demand his removal from the organization also did more harm than good, when the organization claimed against the Israelis that they were trying to threaten him. Needless to say, Israel's requests from the organization to publish a condemnation of the massacre and a call for the release of .the abductees were not answered

After October 7, a senior official in the organization published an anti-Semitic cartoon in which Benjamin Netanyahu is seen putting the Palestinian flag into the crematorium above which is the famous sign from Auschwitz, "Work sets

you free." Another senior official wrote
"in a story: "Israel has no right to exist

From Instagram

"To them, we are monsters"

Even if it is difficult to understand and accept the indifference towards the horrific events of October 7, there is no doubt that advocating for Israel is a difficult and complex task, against the background of the ongoing war, the extent of the destruction and deaths in Gaza and the extreme statements of senior politicians in Israel, some of whom have reached The Hague

We are a non-governmental organization that supports cooperation, that opposes harming the innocent and supports sustainable peace and the protection of all citizens regardless of religion, race and gender," says Hoichman, "and although this is self-evident, we have made it clear repeatedly in emails explaining the situation in Israel. But People didn't like us answering, and didn't agree to hear that Israel also had murdered civilians and that we

have kidnapped and displaced persons. For them, we are
.monsters," he says

At the conference held in April in Malta, the Israeli
representatives arrived much more sober. Still, they were
surprised by the attack on them: "As soon as people found
out that I was from Israel, they didn't talk to me and didn't
agree to shake my hand. You have to remember that these
are medical students and an apolitical organization. Then
we found out that rumors were spreading about us that we
were Mossad agents and IDF soldiers," he says.
.Weichmann

**Even if it is difficult to understand and
accept the indifference towards the horrific
events of October 7, there is no doubt that
advocating for Israel is a difficult and
complex task, against the background of the
ongoing war, the extent of the destruction in
Gaza and the extreme statements of senior
politicians in Israel**

The Gaza fence breached during the Hamas attack on October 7 Photo: Anadolu via AFP

According to him, "In one of the sessions, which dealt with decolonization, we came to explain that the Israeli health system is an example of an apolitical system that overcomes political conflicts and treats people from all countries. But towards the end of the session, a representative of the Swedish delegation came up, shouted and accused us of supporting the bombing of my daughter Patients and genocide. After he finished speaking, half of those present applauded him. We filed a complaint with the ethics committee and received no apology from him or ".his delegation

The subject of the abductees did not bother those present either. "At the conference, I spoke on behalf of Shai Dickman, the cousin of the abductee Carmel Gat, who is studying medicine with me. Even before I started speaking, half of those present left as soon as they saw a picture of the abductees," says Hoichman. "At the conference, we were bullied by members of the organization and part of the management, who did nothing to intervene in the ".consequences of anti-Semitism

Following the events in Malta, Schwimmer arrived prepared for the conference that took place two weeks ago in Finland: "The conference went on as usual, people including Europeans walked around with caps, stickers and a Free Palestine position, and we also did things to raise awareness of the abductees - we handed out yellow pins and CDs, and caught people in one-on-one conversations .on one

At the conference, people walked" around with caps, stickers and a Free Palestine position, and we also did things to raise awareness of the abductees - we handed out yellow pins and CDs, and caught people for one-on-one conversations

The conference in Finland Private album :מימיני , The IFMSA conference in Delhi

?And in this way, people agreed to listen

Schwimmer: "It was a combination of respect and hostility. On the one hand, they already know me because this is my third conference, I have made good personal connections in the past and I have always expressed sorrow for the

plight of people in Gaza. On the other hand, I felt that there was distance or that I was being stared at. When I and the Israeli representative The second we tried to make connections for student exchanges, many avoided. People were afraid to be seen next to us, to smile at us or even talk to us. The hostility to Israel is so entrenched that it is probably difficult for those who cooperate with us to ".advance there

Schwimmer was already preparing to go home, and then came the surprise. On the penultimate night of the conference, she received an informal update from one of the participants: "She told me that there is an initiative to remove Israel from the World Organization, through a proposal by Brazil and Catalonia, and at the moment the initiators are working on a lobby that will ensure a solid majority," she says. In the morning, three proposals suddenly appeared in the conference program - "one for our immediate removal from the organization, and two for ".immediate suspension without investigation

?Is there a precedent for this

No. It happened that countries were expelled because" they did not pay membership fees, but not for a value issue. In the membership organization, countries such as Iran and Syria. In the past, there was a proposal to expel Russia because of the invasion of Ukraine, but they gave it two months notice and the ability to prepare, and in the ".end the expulsion It didn't go up for the vote

In the hours before the vote, Schwimmer turned to every possible factor in an attempt to prevent the move at the last minute - from the Ministry of Health and the Medical Association, to the heads of the universities and the Doctors' Association for Human Rights. Everyone quickly rallied and sent letters asking to avoid the removal, but in vain: the proposal, put forward by Brazil and Spain, was approved by a two-thirds majority and in a procedure that .bends all the rules of the organization itself

It was a combination of respect and" hostility. On the one hand, they already know me, this is my third conference, I have made good personal connections in the past

**and I have always expressed sorrow for the
plight of people in Gaza. On the other hand, I
felt that there was distance or that I was
".being stared at**

The destruction in the Gaza Strip, this month Photo: AFP

When the discussion opened, the first thing they did was" to close the recording and the zoom and to ban any type of recording. In the next step, everyone who wanted spoke in favor of the removal of the medical student organization in Israel," recalls Schwimmer. "When it was my turn, I only had ten minutes to present our position against the impeachment. But before I even opened my mouth, between a third and a half of the participants, including most of the members of the organization's board of directors, left the room. After I finished speaking, they ".returned and others continued to speak

According to the organization's statutes, it is impossible to impeach a country without conducting a preliminary investigation into the accusations against it. The organization found a solution to this problem as well: "They

put to a vote the cancellation of the clause that requires an investigation - and voted in favor. Right after that they ".voted in favor of the immediate suspension

And what about the mobilization of all the ?organizations in Israel

Schwimmer: "The president read the letters, and received boos from those present, claiming that they were trying to put pressure on an independent student organization. They ".were determined to oust us, and nothing changed

Attorney Malka Boro, director of the Department of Law and Public Policy and Foreign Relations at the Israel Medical Association, tried to help her in the fight. We helped draft the defense speech and write letters, but in retrospect, nothing Miri would have said really mattered," she says. "It was an anti-democratic procedure on levels that are hard ".to describe

**Attorney Malka Boro, Director of the Department for
Law and Public Policy and Foreign Relations at the
Israel Medical Association**

Photo: Ingrid Muller

From the moment we heard that this was" the plan, I started scanning their statutes and seeing what could be done. We helped draft the defense speech and write letters, but in retrospect, nothing Miri would have said really mattered. It was an anti-democratic procedure on levels that are hard ".to describe

Indeed, the bottom line is that the impeachment procedure was done without documentation, without many of the voters hearing Israel's arguments, and without any written decision or official reasoning for the impeachment. "It really felt like a modern version of the Dreyfus trial," says Schwimmer. "They basically denied us the opportunity to defend ourselves." After the end of the procedure, there is also no appeal court for the decision—but only the possibility of a repeat vote that requires a two-thirds .majority, which seems almost imaginary at the moment

What was explained to you verbally about the reason ?for the expulsion

Schwimmer: "Orally I have heard arguments like the one I study at Ariel in the Territories, mainly accusations against the Israeli government and not against our organization. If we go by governments, why are the Palestinian representatives still in the organization? Why are Iran, Russia and Syria there? After all, we are all medical"? students. Where is the critical thinking

The younger generation is isolated

The story of Israel's expulsion from the World Federation can be dismissed by saying that it is not a very important organization. But the meaning goes far beyond that, and concerns the isolation of Israelis in the world , with an .emphasis on the younger generation

Many students who left this organization will become" senior officials in the World Health Organization and the Medical Association, representing thousands of students

and influencing them," says Hoichmann. Schwimmer adds that "as soon as we are ostracized from a student organizer, no matter how junior, this has great significance for the image of Israel and of Israeli and Jewish doctors. The ostracism can also have a negative effect on research ".and professional collaborations with future colleagues

מה בכל זאת אפשר לעשות? בעיקר להתעורר, אומרת בורו. "אחרי 7 באוקטובר העולם היהודי התעורר, ומוקמים ארגונים חדשים שעוסקים בהתמודדות עם מקרים כאלה, בסיוע משפטי, דיפלומטי, פוליטי ומול ממשלות וארגונים בינלאומיים, או ארגון של רופאים שמגיבים לפרסומים מכפישים בכתבי עת רפואיים וכבר יש לו הצלחות, וגם הרבה קשיים".

**הדחת ההתאחדות הישראלית מהפדרציה העולמית
של הסטודנטים לרפואה היא לכאורה סיפור קטן,
כמעט שולי מבחינת ההשפעה שלו בעולם האמיתי.
ואולם רצף ההתרחשויות שהוביל להחלטה צריך
להדליק את כל הנורות האדומות האפשריות לגבי
מצבה העגום של ישראל בעולם בכלל, ובעולם
האקדמי־רפואי בפרט**

בעקבות ההחלטה פירסם שר הבריאות, אוריאל בוסו, הצהרה תקיפה נגד ההדחה, וגורמים רפואיים פנו לארגונים בינלאומיים שקשורים לפדרציה ועשויים להשפיע על החלטתה, כולל ממשלות. נבחנו כיוונים שונים, אך בשורה התחתונה הארגון נחוש לסלק את ישראל ותוקף כל ניסיון לשנות את החלטתו.

בעקבות ידיעות שהחלו להתפרסם בנושא, פירסם הארגון העולמי לפני כמה ימים התייחסות רשמית, שכללה את נימוקי ההדחה: ההחלטה התקבלה, "בשל האופי החמור" של ההאשמות נגד הארגון הישראלי, "שכללו איומים נגד סטודנטים, הטרדה מקוונת ודברי שנאה". ההחלטה התקבלה "לאחר דיון מקיף שכלל טיעונים מכל הצדדים, ברוב של שני שלישים מהמצביעים". בסיום ההצהרה יש איום מרומז: "יש לכבד את קבלת ההחלטות של האסיפה הכללית ולשמור על האוטונומיה שלה. לא נסבול כל התנהגות תוקפנית ומטרידה והתקפות אישיות נגד חברינו".

בישראל ממשיכים לנסות להילחם בהחלטה, באופן הבריוני שבו התקבלה ובהאשמות השווא כלפי הנציגים הישראליים. בהסר"י פירסמו גם תגובות להודעת הארגון. אבל שינוי האווירה כלפי ישראל זו כבר משימה גדולה ומאתגרת בהרבה, שעשויה להימשך שנים רבות ותדרוש משאבים שהם הרבה מעבר לכוחם של כמה סטודנטים שנקלעו לעין הסערה.

לחצו לקבלת עדכונים בנושא:

רופאים +

חינוך +

סטודנטים +

ישראל +

אנטישמיות בעולם +

מלחמת חרבות ברזל +

show more

[Purchase a](#) | [terms of use](#) | [administration](#) | [system](#) | [couriers](#)
[Contact](#) | [Questions and answers](#) | [Cancellation of subscription](#) | [subscription](#)
[Accessibility statement](#) | [Published with us](#) | [us](#)

News, news from Israel and the world - news and news in Haaretz newspaper. Scopes, articles, commentaries and in-depth investigations on the high-quality website in Israel
.All rights reserved to Haaretz newspaper publishing Ltd ©