

## **Declaration of the Board of the Israeli Sociological Association – March 3, 2022**

### **Re: The threat to the Israel Studies Program at Washington University**

The Board of the Israeli Sociological Society hereby expresses its concern with the demand to shut down the Israel Studies Program at the University of Washington.

The program is considered professional and successful, and its director, Prof. Liora Halperin, is a well-regarded scholar. Although it is well within the university management's authority to pay back the funds to the donors, it is a matter of our concern feared that this case might serve as a dangerous precedent, empowering donors to impose their political views and punish academics for their opinions and belief, through their very ability to donate funds and threaten to reclaim them back in the future.

The Israeli Sociological Society is the largest professional association in Israeli social sciences. It represents 430 researchers who study Israeli society, with diverse personal worldviews. It considers the protection of the academic freedom and freedom of speech of each scholar an essential prerequisite for conducting academic research.

The ISS promotes the study of all sectors and aspects of Israeli society worldwide, particularly in American universities. Shutting down the Israel Studies Program by Washington University is liable to affect similar programs throughout the US, should they become identified with the political views of donors, rather than with academic excellence grounded in academic freedom.

Therefore, the ISS Board calls upon Washington University to reinstate the Israel Studies Program with the full resources hitherto available to it, so that no other donors would conclude that they are entitled to demand their money back, and thereby jeopardize academic freedom.