



אוניברסיטת חיפה  
UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA  
جامعة حيفا

What will it take  
to make this  
Home Again?

**HARNESSING THE POWER  
OF SCIENCE AND RESEARCH  
TO REBUILD NORTHERN ISRAEL**

2025-2026

**T**he path to renewal begins with investing in people – giving them the skills, knowledge, and mentoring to rebuild and emerge stronger than before.

Just one day after the devastating attacks of October 7 sent shockwaves through Israeli society, the tremors of violence rippled northward as Hezbollah rockets shattered the tranquility of the northern region. Suddenly, 68,500 northern residents – young families, seniors, farmers and business owners - became refugees in their own country. Now, as a fragile ceasefire offers a measure of hope, these communities are determined to return and rebuild.

But the road home is daunting: shuttered businesses, widespread trauma, a weakened educational system, vulnerable seniors reluctant to move back, unresolved compensation disputes, and once-thriving farmlands and natural habitats now lie scorched and polluted. As of March 2025, only 42% (29,000) of the evacuees from 43 northern communities have returned home.\* Many are still weighing their options, citing security, employment, healthcare, and education as primary concerns.

**In the wake of this profound disruption, the University of Haifa has launched the Home Again Campaign to support a bold and vital mission: harnessing the power of science and research to help rebuild northern Israel.**

Drawing on our deep roots in the region and commitment to community-centered innovation, University scholars are transforming data-driven insights into real-world solutions—restoring lives, healing landscapes, and strengthening society. Each initiative within the campaign serves as an interlocking building block, reinforcing and amplifying the strength of the whole.

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\* Source: Israel National Digital Agency (2025)

University  
of Haifa

**Data Driven. Community Rooted. Home Again.**

## PUTTING KNOWLEDGE INTO ACTION: 3 BUILDING BLOCKS FOR LASTING CHANGE

PROFESSIONAL  
SKILLS TRAINING

THERAPY FOR EMOTIONAL  
WELLBEING & PHYSICAL  
REHABILITATION

INVESTING IN  
COMMUNITY FUTURES

We stand at a defining moment in Israeli history as we face the daunting task of rebuilding after the war.

**The University of Haifa is uniquely  
positioned to lead recovery efforts.**

From pioneering physical rehabilitation to restoring damaged ecosystems, we deliver research-driven solutions to the North's most urgent challenges.

**This is our home.**

Join us by supporting the Home Again Campaign.

*Gur Alroey*

**Prof. Gur Alroey**  
President



By the end of September 2024, Hezbollah had launched hundreds of rockets into northern Israel, striking both rural and urban areas and causing widespread destruction to homes, infrastructure, and the environment.

# PROFESSIONAL SKILLS TRAINING

## VITAL SKILLS FOR RECOVERY

The devastation in northern Israel has created not just physical destruction, but a profound disruption to the region's professional ecosystem. Local economies have stalled, healthcare systems are straining under unprecedented demand, and educators are grappling with problems that require culturally and linguistically sensitive pedagogic support.

Amid this challenging landscape, the University of Haifa is creating targeted training programs that address the North's most urgent needs while building capacity for long-term renewal. In partnership with local government, the ministries of health, education, and the environment, and grassroots organizations in the North, the University is equipping northern residents with specialized skills that serve a dual purpose: healing communities today while creating sustainable career pathways for tomorrow.

The University's professional training initiatives are particularly vital in rural and peripheral communities where access to specialized education has historically been limited. Moreover, we are placing a special emphasis on providing discharged soldiers and reservists with training in the "blue economy" – an emerging sector where marine sustainability, regional livelihood and academic research converge.



**Unemployment rates have surged by 49%, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations, including youth and Arab communities.**

\* Source: Employment Service Data (2024)

Now, as these communities face their greatest challenge in generations, accessible local training is creating new opportunities and reversing the North's talent drain. Each program is carefully designed to respond to the region's unique post-conflict needs while establishing northern Israel as a center of excellence in fields ranging from psychological resilience to ecological rehabilitation.

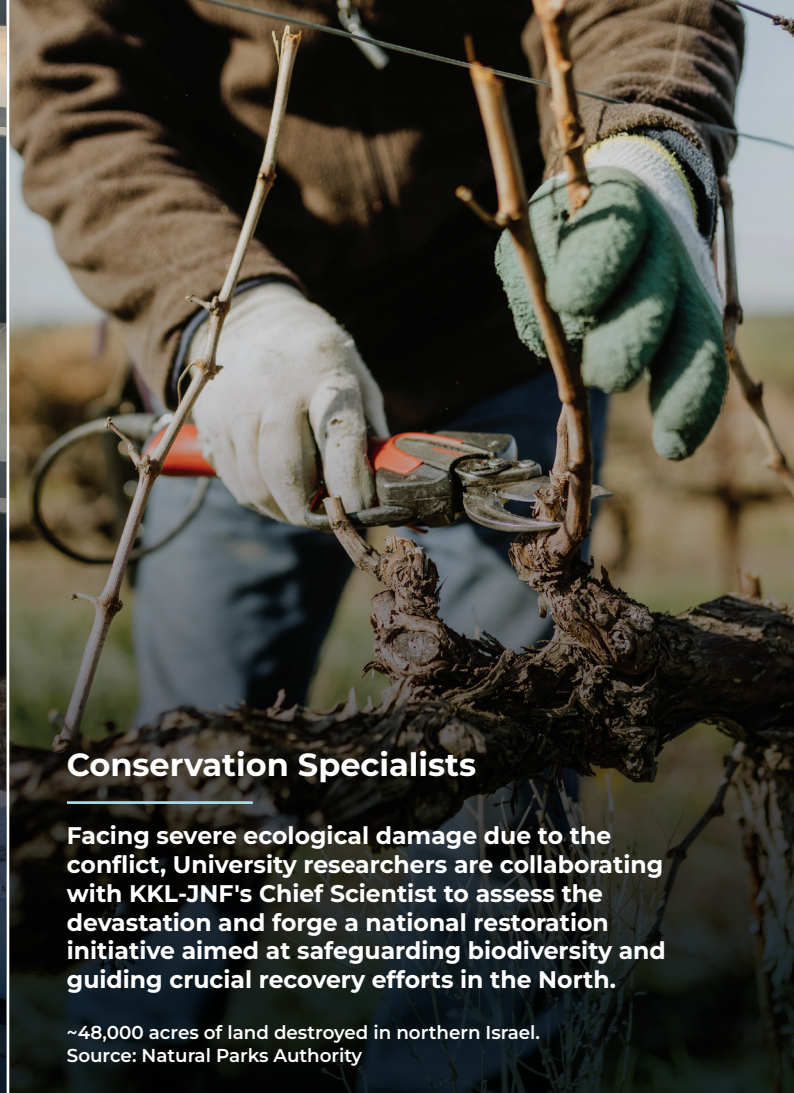
With the right training, this moment of crisis can become a turning point—mobilizing local talent to restore what was lost and shape a stronger northern Israel.



## Teachers

Responding to a 62% parental report of declining child mental health,\* the University's Faculty of Education is training teachers to deploy vital school-based interventions like "Erase Stress" and "Reading for Resilience" to foster well-being across student populations.

\* Source: Eastern Galilee Regional Knowledge Center

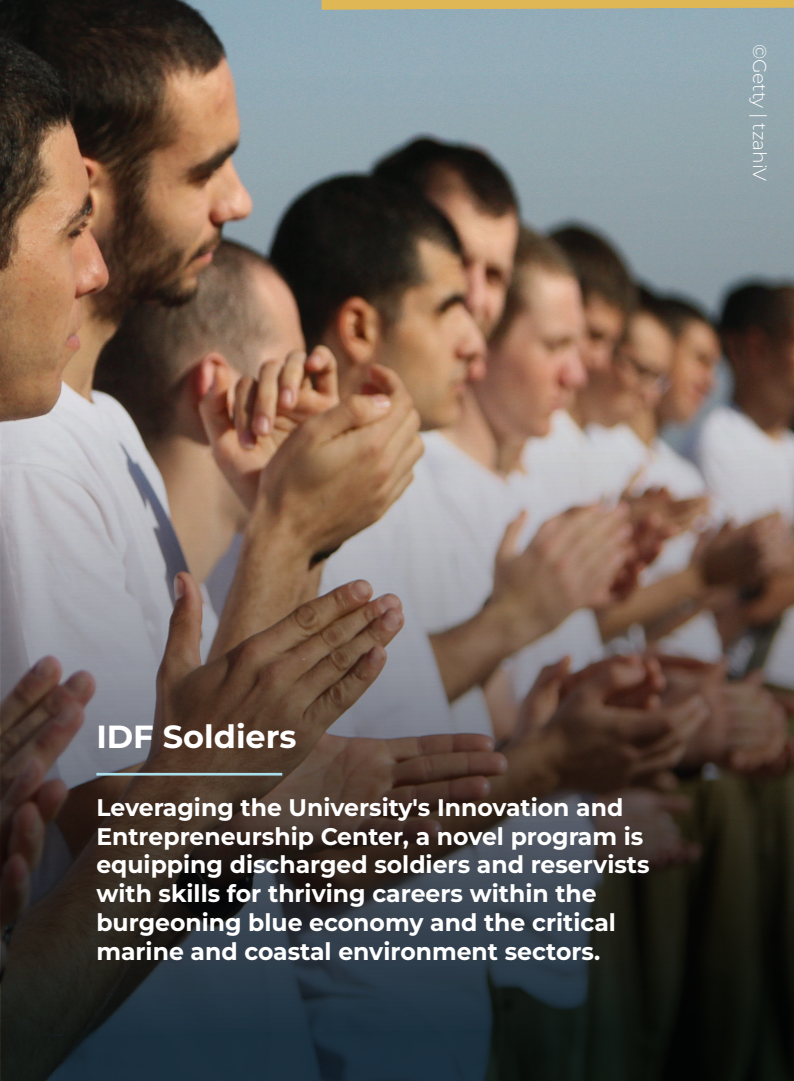


## Conservation Specialists

Facing severe ecological damage due to the conflict, University researchers are collaborating with KKL-JNF's Chief Scientist to assess the devastation and forge a national restoration initiative aimed at safeguarding biodiversity and guiding crucial recovery efforts in the North.

~48,000 acres of land destroyed in northern Israel.  
Source: Natural Parks Authority

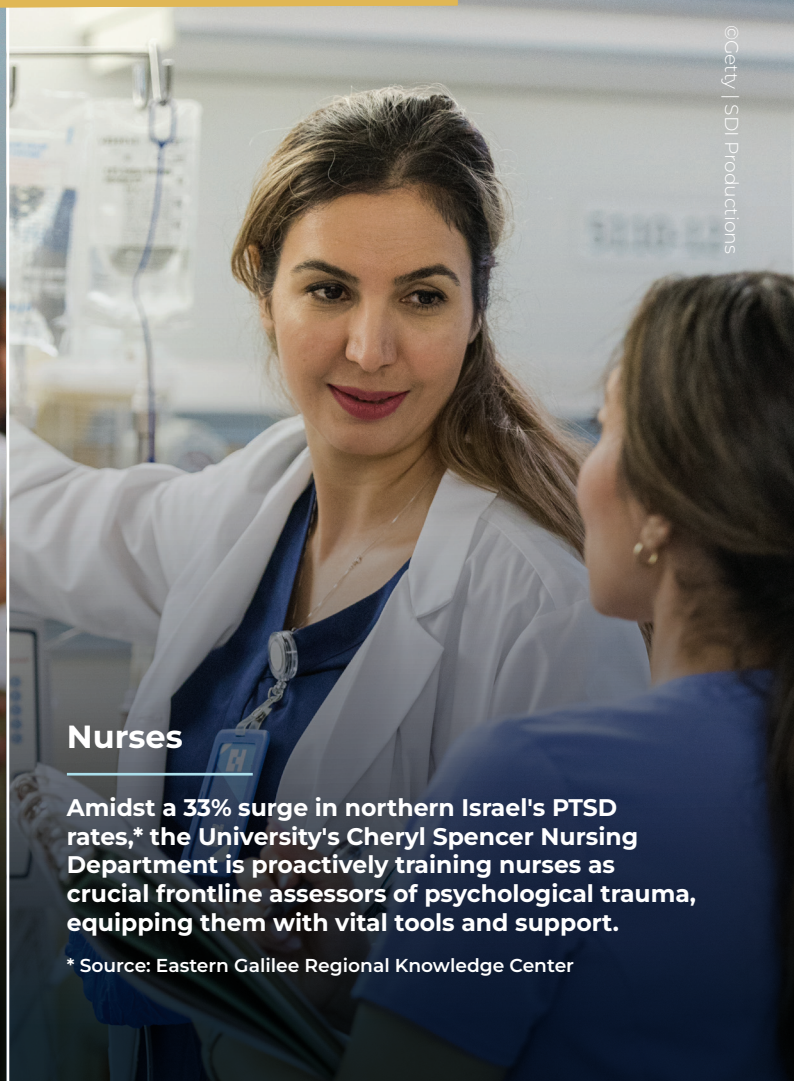
# FLAGSHIP TRAINING INITIATIVES



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## IDF Soldiers

Leveraging the University's Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center, a novel program is equipping discharged soldiers and reservists with skills for thriving careers within the burgeoning blue economy and the critical marine and coastal environment sectors.



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## Nurses

Amidst a 33% surge in northern Israel's PTSD rates,\* the University's Cheryl Spencer Nursing Department is proactively training nurses as crucial frontline assessors of psychological trauma, equipping them with vital tools and support.

\* Source: Eastern Galilee Regional Knowledge Center

# EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL THERAPY

## MERGING CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH AND COMPASSIONATE CARE

Long after the last air raid sirens fell silent, the physical and emotional trauma of October 7 continues to reverberate across northern Israel, shaping thousands of lives.

Children who evacuated under fire, families separated for months by reserve duty, and youth studying in improvised schools now exhibit signs of profound emotional distress. Recent studies confirm that both displacement and prolonged parental absence have had lasting impacts on children's emotional well-being. Their recovery now lags significantly behind that of peers from less affected regions.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, northern hospitals face overwhelming demand for physical rehabilitation services. Combat-wounded soldiers, civilians injured in attacks, and elderly residents who lost strength during extended sheltering all require sustained, specialized care that the region's infrastructure struggles to provide. As one recent report notes, "While central Israel boasts several well-established rehabilitation centers with the capacity to handle complex injuries, the periphery has a limited number of rehabilitation beds, specialized treatments, and experienced staff."<sup>2</sup>

As the North embarks on a long and complex recovery, the University of Haifa is leading efforts to support healing on multiple fronts. Mental health teams are expanding trauma care for displaced families and vulnerable children. Simultaneously, the Department of Physical Therapy is planning a pioneering regional rehabilitation center that will combine clinical care and academic research within a community-based model—the first such initiative of its kind in Israel. This integrated approach will allow for the real-time application of research findings to improve patient outcomes.



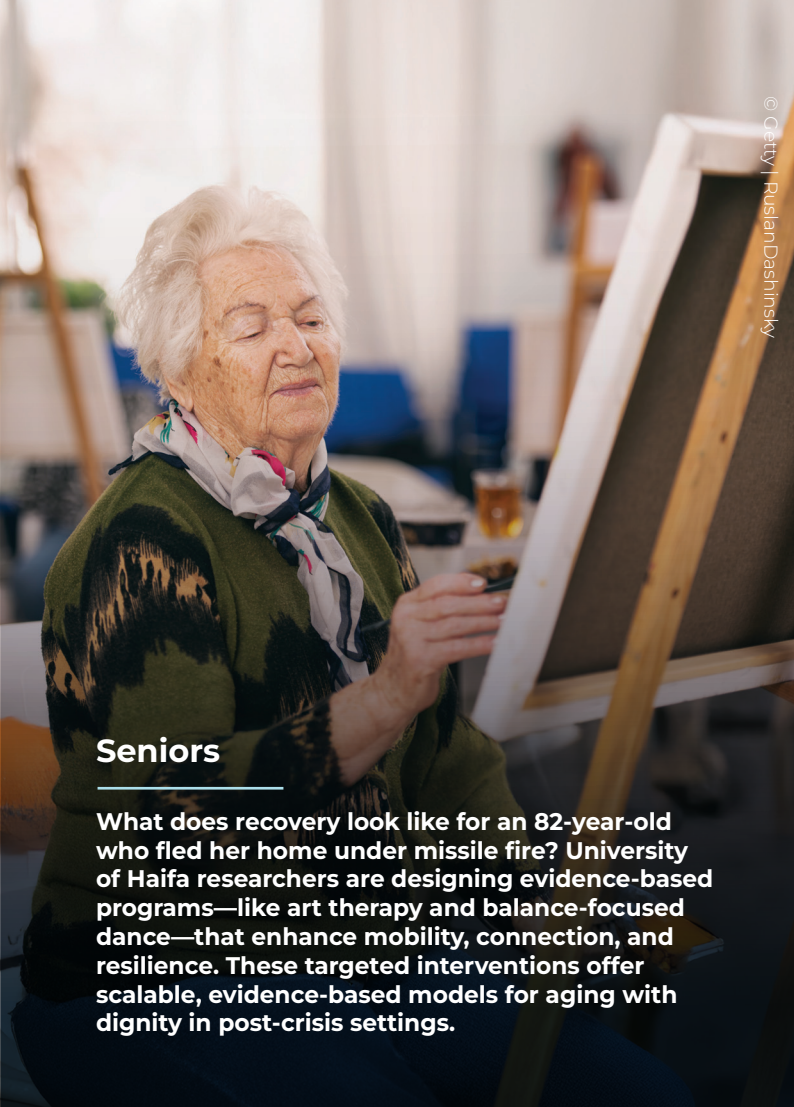
With trauma lingering and rehabilitation services stretched thin, the University of Haifa is stepping up—advancing care, training professionals, and creating a first-of-its-kind community rehabilitation and research center for the region.

Each of these initiatives addresses a different facet of the region's recovery. Taken together, they aim to restore dignity, function, and hope to a region determined to heal—and poised to shape a brighter future.

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<sup>1</sup> Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel (2025)

<sup>2</sup> IATI & PwC Israel, Life Science Report 2024-25: Challenges and Adaptations Related to the Iron Swords War, (2024)



© Getty | RussianDashinsky

## Seniors

What does recovery look like for an 82-year-old who fled her home under missile fire? University of Haifa researchers are designing evidence-based programs—like art therapy and balance-focused dance—that enhance mobility, connection, and resilience. These targeted interventions offer scalable, evidence-based models for aging with dignity in post-crisis settings.



© Government Press Office | Amos Ben Gershon

## Injured IDF Soldiers and Civilians

For those injured, returning home to the North often means isolation and uneven care. Dr. Hilla Sarig Bahat envisions a new model – combining clinical care, research, and community-based support. With data-driven programs and measurable outcomes, the proposed Community Rehabilitation and Research Center aims to restore lives in northern Israel and establish a benchmark for global rehabilitation excellence.

# FLAGSHIP THERAPEUTIC INITIATIVES



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## Families

To meet the rising mental health needs of evacuated families, University of Haifa specialists created a rapid-response network combining a 24-hour hotline with mobile therapeutic teams. This trauma-informed care model delivers urgent support wherever families are—reducing distress and preventing long-term harm through immediate and culturally-sensitive interventions.



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## Healthcare Professionals

Digilton, a research-backed digital platform, helps clinicians swiftly identify levels of psychological distress, distinguishing low-risk from urgent cases. By streamlining triage, it improves patient outcomes and optimizes scarce mental health resources—setting a new standard for scalable, efficient, and effective mental healthcare delivery.

# INVESTING IN COMMUNITY FUTURES

## SCIENCE, SOLIDARITY, AND THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL'S BORDER COMMUNITIES

Communities are not just places on a map. They are a delicate balance of relationships, mutual trust, shared public spaces, and equality before the law. The attacks of October 7 disrupted this crucial balance.

We believe that communities shattered by violence can be deliberately reconstructed—by drawing on a growing body of science in social cohesion and community resilience.

At the University of Haifa, scholars are partnering with local institutions to translate research into community renewal. Legal teams offer real-time assistance to evacuees and victims of war and terror while collecting data to inform national policy. Sociologists, drawing on field-tested approaches, are helping reweave trust in multicultural communities. These interventions provide both immediate relief and a scalable framework for long-term resilience—anchored in data and lived experience.

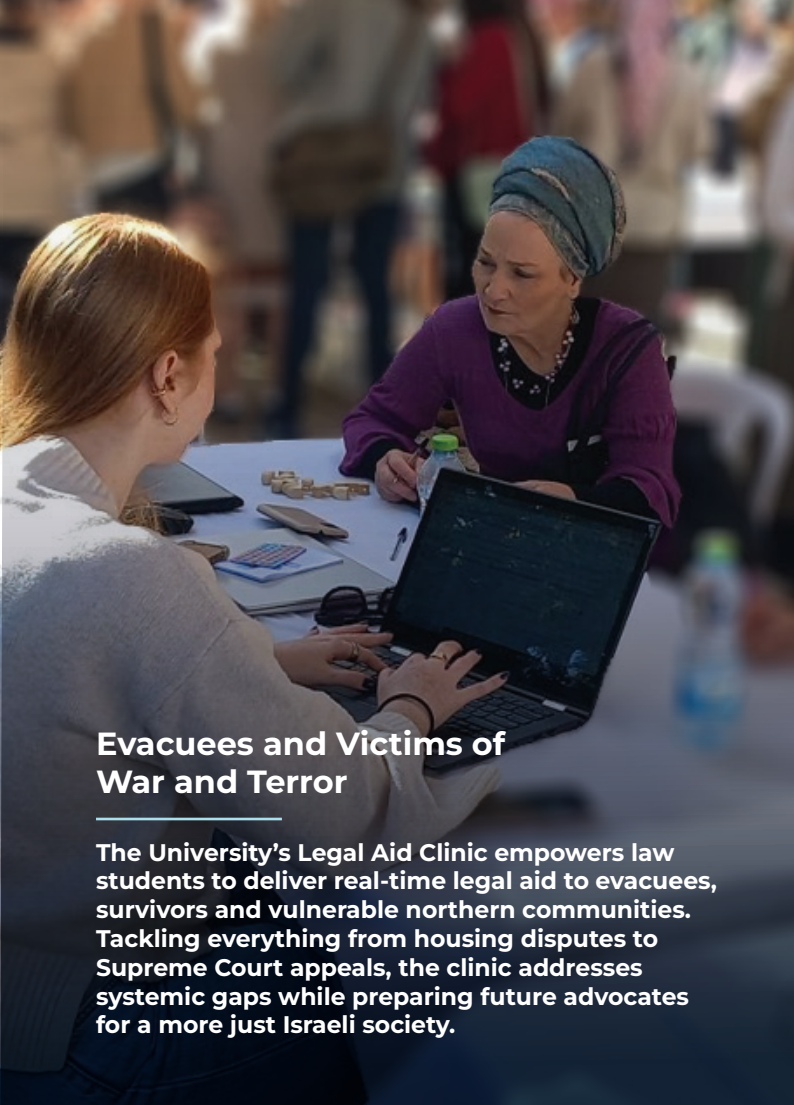
The stakes extend far beyond local reconstruction. Should northern communities fail to reestablish themselves, some security analysts warn that Israeli sovereignty will inevitably shift southward, fundamentally threatening the security of the entire country. The strategic imperative of the moment is clear: repopulate and reinvigorate these communities, or risk a gradual, almost imperceptible contraction of national territory that will fundamentally alter Israel's strategic depth.



A recent survey revealed a significant drop in the sense of national togetherness. In December 2023, **54%** of Israelis reported a high sense of solidarity. By September 2024, this figure had plummeted to **26%**, indicating a substantial erosion of communal cohesion in the aftermath of the conflict.

\*Source: Israel Democracy  
Institute (2024)

This is not only about coming home—it's about coming home stronger, together. By reinvigorating these border communities, we are in a very real sense reinforcing Israel's national resilience, transforming vulnerability into strategic strength.



## Evacuees and Victims of War and Terror

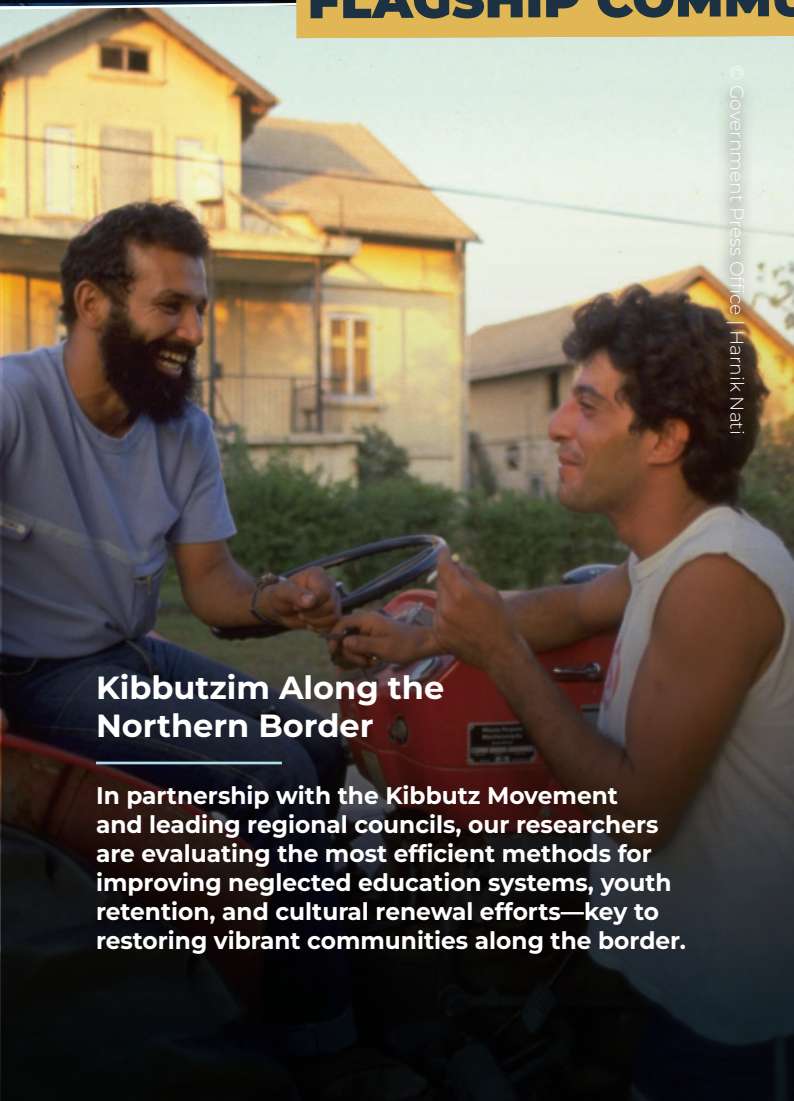
The University's Legal Aid Clinic empowers law students to deliver real-time legal aid to evacuees, survivors and vulnerable northern communities. Tackling everything from housing disputes to Supreme Court appeals, the clinic addresses systemic gaps while preparing future advocates for a more just Israeli society.



## Businesses that Employ Jews and Arabs

Post-October 7, Jewish-Arab tensions intensified. Nowhere is the impact more immediate—or the opportunity for change more important—than in the workplace. By funding research and evidence-based solutions that foster coexistence, you can directly contribute to healing divides and revitalizing the region's economy.

# FLAGSHIP COMMUNITY INITIATIVES



## Kibbutzim Along the Northern Border

In partnership with the Kibbutz Movement and leading regional councils, our researchers are evaluating the most efficient methods for improving neglected education systems, youth retention, and cultural renewal efforts—key to restoring vibrant communities along the border.



## Uprooted Communities in Distress

The war left many communities displaced and families in distress. The unmet needs of this population are only growing—and available assistance is limited. In response, researchers from our School of Social Work are harnessing AI to mine public data, enabling local social workers to streamline services and deliver faster, more targeted support to those who need it most.

# MEET OUR RESEARCHERS AND STUDENTS

## Researcher Profile

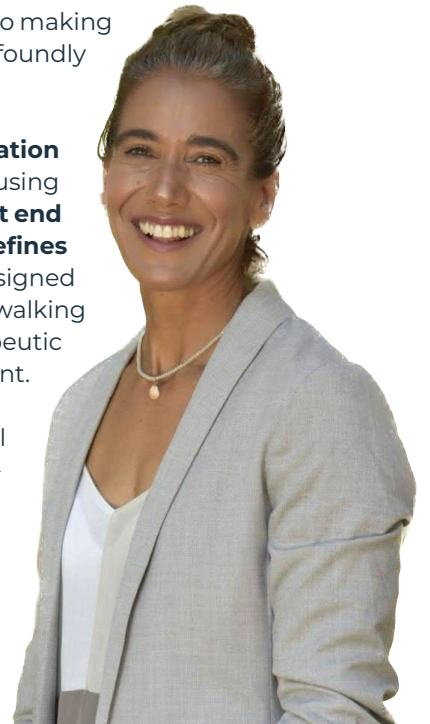
**Dr. Hilla Sarig Bahat: Department of Physical Therapy**

Dr. Hilla Sarig Bahat has a motto: **"Smile at the world, and it will smile back at you."** Not a sentiment one might expect from someone whose military service ended with a fractured pelvis and leg—and months confined to a trauma ward. Yet it captures the mindset that carried her through surgeries, setbacks, and the solitary process of learning to walk again.

That experience, rather than derailing her life's path, merely redirected it. Introduced to the world of physiotherapy as a patient, she began to see its potential, not only for healing, but for transformation. She pursued advanced study, eventually earning a doctorate, and has since devoted her career to physical therapy and rehabilitation science. Her work draws directly from her own recovery—committed to making the process more cohesive, more compassionate, and more profoundly human.

Now, she is spearheading efforts to create a **Community Rehabilitation and Research Center** in northern Israel—a first-of-its-kind model fusing academic research with real-time clinical care. **"Rehabilitation doesn't end when the patient is discharged—it begins there. What we do next defines recovery,"** she explains. Every component of the proposed center is designed to close the critical gap between hospital and home: community walking groups for amputees and trauma survivors, individualized therapeutic support, and a research arm to assess outcomes and refine treatment.

Today, Hilla is a busy mother of four, a leader in the field of physical therapy and an enthusiastic surfer. Her story began with injury—but her impact lies in recovery, not only her own, but that of an entire region in need of smarter, more compassionate care.



## Student Profile

### Shachar Eden: From the Front Lines to the Legal Front

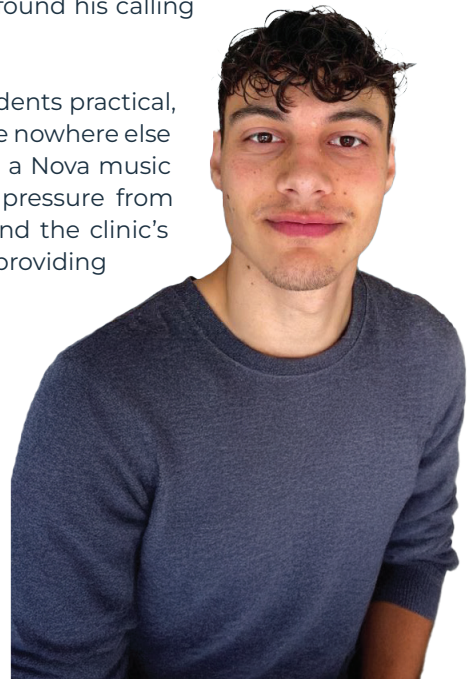
At 25, Shachar Eden is no stranger to adversity—or to service. A second-year law student, Shachar brings a sense of purpose to his studies, shaped by the realities he faced as an IDF tank commander.

While patrolling the Israeli-Egyptian border during his regular army service, Shachar's unit thwarted an attempted infiltration. Amid the fighting, an explosion left him with significant hearing loss in his left ear. After months of treatment, most of his hearing returned—but the experience left a lasting impression. As Shachar explains, "When you've faced adversity yourself, you internalize the need to help others."

After completing his army service, Shachar enrolled in the Faculty of Law, determined to continue serving his country in a new capacity. When the Swords of Iron War broke out, he was unable to return to reserve duty due to his injury, but he was determined to contribute in any way he could. He found his calling volunteering with the Legal Aid Clinic in Times of War.

"The Legal Clinic fulfills a dual mandate – giving law students practical, hands-on experience while helping war victims who have nowhere else to turn for help." He is especially proud of his work with a Nova music festival survivor, who struggled with PTSD and faced pressure from his employer to quit. Thanks to Shachar's dedication and the clinic's support, the survivor received full severance benefits, providing crucial financial stability during his recovery.

Your support enables students like Shachar to transform their compassion and expertise into real-world impact, providing hope and justice to those who need it most.

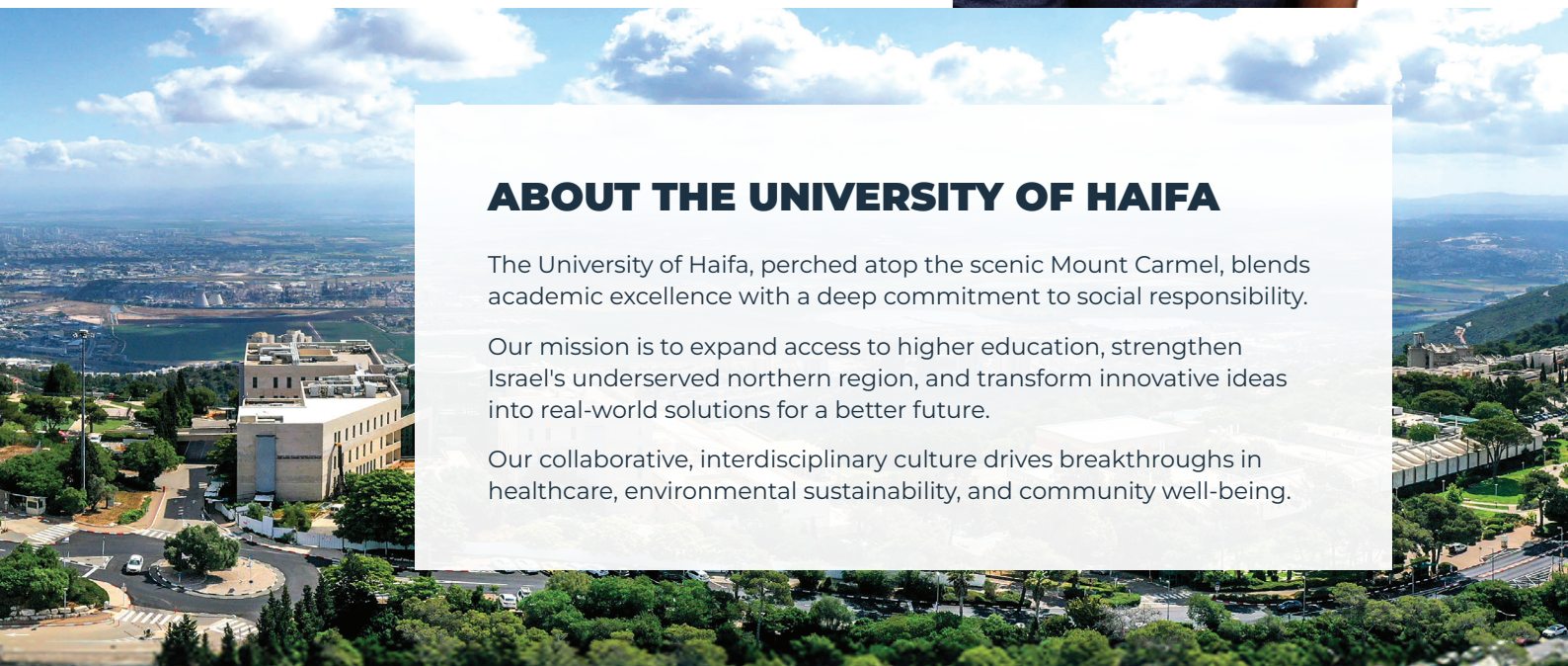


## ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA

The University of Haifa, perched atop the scenic Mount Carmel, blends academic excellence with a deep commitment to social responsibility.

Our mission is to expand access to higher education, strengthen Israel's underserved northern region, and transform innovative ideas into real-world solutions for a better future.

Our collaborative, interdisciplinary culture drives breakthroughs in healthcare, environmental sustainability, and community well-being.



# What will it take to make this Home Again?

**The road ahead is difficult,  
but no one should have to walk it alone.**

Thanks to your support, we are turning science into impact, challenges into opportunities, and resilience into renewal.

With an ambitious two-year campaign, we are committed to **raising \$60 million.**

Join us in bringing the North **home again.**

**Data Driven. Community Rooted. Home Again.**