



אוניברסיטת חיפה
UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA
جامعة حيفا

LEADING CHANGE IN THE MIDDLE EAST BY INVESTING IN KEY LEADERS ACROSS THE REGION



2025-26 Academic Year

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Academic institutions are becoming an essential bridge for cooperation across the Middle East, connecting legal scholars, policymakers, and public leaders in ways that formal diplomacy alone cannot. As these professional relationships expand, so does the need for rigorous training that prepares experienced practitioners to work effectively across legal systems, political structures, and national boundaries.

To meet this need, the University of Haifa is establishing a network of **Regional Leadership Initiatives**. Drawing on experts from the Faculty of Law and the School of Political Science, the program will equip accomplished professionals with the expertise and practical judgment required for senior leadership roles in government, the judiciary, and public service.

The initiative is built around three core components:

- **The Joubran Center for Democracy and Human Rights** — a research hub dedicated to strengthening democratic institutions and protecting civil liberties.
- **MA in International Relations with a Specialty in Regional Leadership** — a graduate program designed for senior government officials and diplomats seeking to deepen strategic and policy expertise.
- **The International Judges Academy** — a professional platform enabling judges to engage in cross-border exchange and advanced study in comparative law.

Strengthening the expertise and professional networks of those who shape public institutions, the University of Haifa is helping build the human capacity required for durable cooperation, effective governance, and long-term regional stability.



REGIONAL LEADERSHIP INITIATIVES

ATTRACTING FUTURE LEADERS FROM ACROSS THE MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East stands at a crossroads. One path leads to turmoil—political instability, economic hardship, and ongoing conflict. The other offers a future of stability—shared prosperity, justice, good governance and regional cooperation.

At this critical juncture, the University of Haifa is emerging as a key player in shaping the region's trajectory. With our strong regional reputation in both law and political science, coupled with a growing network of academic collaborations with neighboring countries following the Abraham Accords, we are establishing a collaborative network of Regional Leadership Initiatives.

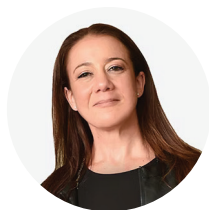
This unique network of academic and research programs will be the first in Israel to combine experts from the Faculty of Law and the School of Political Science to shape the next generation of leaders. By combining these two critical disciplines, we will equip future judges, lawyers, and senior government officials with the skills needed to navigate complex political and legal landscapes. This will prepare them to drive meaningful, lasting change across the region.

The University will launch the initiative through the establishment of:

- 1.** The Joubran Center for Democracy and Human Rights
- 2.** MA in International Relations with a Specialty in Regional Leadership
- 3.** The International Judges Academy

The University of Haifa has a long-standing tradition of international academic excellence, with its International School successfully running Study Abroad Graduate Programs for over 35 years. Our extensive network of global partnerships connects students with diverse perspectives, comparative legal and political frameworks, and real-world case studies, providing a truly world-class education.

The challenges facing our region demand judicious, principled, interdisciplinary solutions. Your support will help train the policymakers and legal experts who will drive real change. Together, we can shape a better future for the Middle East and beyond.



Professor Dana Vashdi

Former Head, School of Political Science

Dana Vashdi



Professor Tal Zarsky

Dean, Faculty of Law

Tal Zarsky

THE JOUBRAN CENTER FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

GUIDING VISION

The University of Haifa aims to create a center dedicated to democracy and human rights research, honoring the life and legacy of Israel's first Arab Israeli Supreme Court Justice, Salim Joubran (of blessed memory). Justice Joubran, who retired as Deputy Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, served on the court from 2003 to 2017 and was renowned for his formidable commitment to democracy, human rights, and civil liberties as well as his legal expertise.

The Joubran Center for Democracy and Human Rights will be part of the Faculty of Law at University of Haifa and will promote the protection of democratic principles and human rights in Israel, the Middle East, and beyond. With a focus on scholarly research and advocacy, the Center will cultivate the next generation of legal scholars and provide them with the tools to address current and future challenges to liberal democracy. Through its work, the Center will embody Justice Joubran's belief and vision that democracy and the rule of law are the foundations of a thriving society.



THE CENTER'S ACTIVITIES

The Center will promote interdisciplinary and comparative research on democracy and human rights. To advance this overarching goal, the Center will offer a number of high-impact initiatives, including:

- ① Human rights-focused **research grants** to Ph.D., postdoctoral, and tenure-track scholars (from Israel and abroad) in law and related disciplines including humanities, social sciences, and exact sciences. Fellows will be based at the University of Haifa for up to a year.
- ① An **annual conference** and **year-long seminar** to bring together leading theorists, empiricists, and practitioners. The events will facilitate the exchange of ideas, fostering crucial cross-pollination between theory and practical application.
- ① Special **workshops and retreats** for law students (LL.B., LL.M.), to deepen their understanding of democracy, human rights, and the intersection of sociological, economic, and technological processes.
- ① Support of **research dissemination** and **idea exchange** via local and international conferences and roundtables at the University of Haifa and partner institutions.



SUPREME COURT JUSTICE
SALIM JOUBRAN

Justice Joubran was born in Haifa. His contributions to the field of law and justice in Israel are unparalleled. An Arab citizen of Israel, Justice Joubran lived a life committed to the foundational values of the State's Declaration of Independence. His compelling and crystallized perspective on Israel's legal and judiciary challenges continue to resonate with clarity and conviction as the State continues to contend with ongoing debates on democracy and human rights.



ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP
PROFESSOR AMNON REICHMAN

Professor Amnon Reichman's work shapes legal discourse across diverse areas, including human rights, AI regulation, and the evolution of constitutional law. A respected scholar, he has taught at institutions like Berkeley Law and Cardozo, led the Israeli Law and Society Association, and garnered prestigious awards and grants. Holding degrees from leading universities and having clerked for Justice Aharon Barak, Professor Reichman brings a wealth of experience to his influential work.

MA IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS WITH A SPECIALTY IN REGIONAL LEADERSHIP

GUIDING VISION

Building on its already impressive menu of international graduate offerings, the School of Political Science is expanding its academic agenda with an exclusive graduate degree in International Relations with a Specialty in Regional Leadership. Designed for senior government employees and emerging leaders across the region, this prestigious program will empower participants with the knowledge and skills essential for driving strategic decision-making in an era of global complexity.

Leveraging the full resources of the Faculty of Social Sciences, this interdisciplinary program blends rigorous academic study with real-world application. Participants will learn from experts committed to upholding the core principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

Program Overview

The MA Program
will offer a rich
menu of educational
experiences:



Leadership focused courses that help participants develop a sophisticated understanding of regional geopolitics, economic systems and crisis management.



Personalized mentorship and **internship opportunities** with high-ranking diplomatic professionals, policy makers and government officials.



Study trips that expose participants to real-world policy challenges and connect them with experts and practitioners in the field.



Build lasting **professional networks** with influential regional leaders.



Hands-on interaction and participation in **research forums** alongside our researchers, who conduct rigorous studies on topics such as the spatial, technological, and legal aspects of international conflict, maritime strategy, and security.

By equipping graduates with the expertise, connections, and practical experience needed to influence policy and governance, the graduate program will position the University of Haifa as a leader in regional diplomacy, shaping policies that drive sustainable development, cooperation, and peace.

ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

Professor Dana Vashdi is an expert on leadership. Her research centers on leading teams, with a particular emphasis on enhancing team effectiveness and the well-being of team members. Motivated by national and international adverse events, evolving workplace dynamics, and the resulting stress, Vashdi also investigates questions related to learning and collaboration between teams and organizations, as well as between governments and their citizens. As a field researcher, she conducts field experiments and survey-based studies across diverse organizations and nations.



PARTICIPANT PROFILE/ TESTIMONIAL

Ariana Bekteshi, Kosovo

“Choosing the University of Haifa was not just about earning a degree—it was about preparing for the realities of modern diplomacy. This program has challenged me to think critically, engage deeply, and develop solutions in an ever-changing global landscape.

Diplomacy is not just theory; it is the art of engagement, the mastery of nuance, and the pursuit of solutions that others overlook. Haifa’s courses push beyond conventional thinking, encouraging critical analysis and high-level collaboration. With exceptional professors and a dynamic, diverse student body, I have found not just a place to learn but a platform to shape global discourse.

There is no better place to redefine the future of diplomacy than in Israel, where resilience and innovation shape every aspect of society. Here, diplomacy is not an abstract concept—it is a lived experience. And at the University of Haifa, I have gained not just an education, but the tools to make a real impact.”

INTERNATIONAL JUDGES ACADEMY

GUIDING VISION

In an era of globalization and rapid legal transformation, judges must grapple with new and complex challenges that transcend national boundaries. The International Judges Academy provides a unique academic space where judicial professionals can come together to analyze key issues affecting the legal system, engage in meaningful cross-cultural exchanges, and deepen their understanding of international and comparative law.

For over a decade, the University of Haifa successfully hosted an International Judges Academy, fostering collaboration among legal professionals from around the world. With a deep-rooted commitment to human rights, democracy, and judicial ethics, the University is relaunching this initiative to create an intellectual hub where legal minds can refine their perspectives, broaden their networks, and contribute to the advancement of global justice.

Program Overview

Combining physical and online learning to accommodate the demanding schedules of working judges, the International Judges Academy will deliver a specialized curriculum that sharpens judicial expertise and leadership. Key components include:



Specialized training in judicial ethics and comparative law, providing judges with insights into different legal traditions and ethical decision-making frameworks.



Embedded focus on human rights and fair decision-making, ensuring that judicial rulings align with fundamental democratic principles and international legal standards.



Establishing a global network of judges dedicated to justice while fostering collaboration, knowledge exchange, and best practices among legal professionals worldwide.



Leadership competencies, training judges to adeptly handle complex legal environments, manage courtroom dynamics, and influence meaningful judicial reforms.



Academic visits and joint experiences, facilitating first-hand learning from experts and thought leaders at globally leading academic and judicial institutions.

ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

Professor Tal Zarsky's research focuses on the legal implications of information privacy, cybersecurity, internet policy, and algorithmic decision-making. His scholarship is widely published and frequently cited in digital law discussions. He has advised policymakers and businesses and has served on multiple advisory boards. Zarsky has held academic positions at leading institutions, including Yale, NYU, and Columbia, where he earned his doctorate. He also holds degrees in law and psychology from the Hebrew University and Columbia University.



PARTICIPANT PROFILE/ TESTIMONIAL

**Judge Carolina Rius Alarcó
(Spain), Class of 2017**

"The International LLM Program for Judges at Haifa University delivers exceptional teaching and mentorship. The lectures are both intellectually stimulating and practically relevant, enhanced by the diverse perspectives of fellow judges from various legal systems around the world.

This program significantly enriched my professional development and personal outlook. My experience at Haifa expanded my understanding of comparative law and judicial practices globally—knowledge that continues to inform my work on the bench.

Adding to the experience is the University's stunning location atop Mount Carmel with magnificent views of Haifa and the Mediterranean Sea, making it a truly an inspiring environment for judicial education."

ACADEMIC STRUCTURE

The Regional Leadership Initiatives will be led by a steering group — bringing together leading faculty members from the University's Faculty of Law and School of Political Science, as well as other prominent figures from academia and beyond. This interdisciplinary approach creates a unified ecosystem where each initiative serves a distinct purpose while reinforcing the others: the Joubran Center generates foundational research, the MA program develops practical policy approaches, and the Judges Academy ensures legal frameworks uphold democratic principles and the rule of law. Through joint seminars, collaborative research, and shared resources, these initiatives do not merely coexist but actively strengthen each other, creating impact far greater than what any single program could achieve alone.

To ensure a comprehensive and practical learning experience, faculty members from the Faculty of Law and the School of Political Science will co-teach courses on relevant topics. Furthermore, the initiative will host joint conferences designed to provide valuable insights for judges and senior government employees in areas of mutual relevance. In the future, we will expand the depth and breadth of our offerings by integrating specialists from additional faculties and schools, further enriching this interdisciplinary approach.

ABOUT

UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA

Where Research and Innovation Meet Society

With the future growing ever more complex and interconnected, scientific innovation has become more crucial than ever. At the University of Haifa, we are committed to pushing the boundaries of knowledge and developing breakthrough solutions that will not only shape that future, but fundamentally transform it.

As the largest research university in northern Israel, the University of Haifa is home to more than 18,000 students and faculty members from diverse ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. We offer a broad range of academic programs across six faculties: Humanities, Social Sciences, Law, Natural Sciences, Social Welfare and Health Studies, and Education. These faculties support the university's strong research focus, which translates academic expertise into real-world solutions. This institutional ethos is reflected in a growing number of one-of-a-kind research centers in Israel which have gained an international reputation.



BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE THROUGH EDUCATION

The University of Haifa serves a diverse population reflecting the multifaceted nature of Israeli society, particularly in the northern region. Its student body encompasses a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds, including students from both affluent and less privileged communities, with a strong commitment to widening access for those from lower socioeconomic strata.

The University is home to students of various ethnic and racial origins, including Jewish students of diverse backgrounds (Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Mizrahi, Ethiopian), Arab students (Christian, Muslim, Druze, Circassian), and international students from around the globe.

- **66% women**
- **47% first-generation university students**
- **36% students from Arab society**
- **42% of our BA students come from low-income backgrounds**



FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

We invite you to join us in supporting this transformative initiative, one that is set to cultivate a new generation of leaders, advance stability in the Middle East, and share vital knowledge worldwide.

By partnering with us and leveraging our expertise and multidisciplinary approach to leadership development, you will drive research, foster collaboration, and promote a more peaceful and just future.

➤ **A landmark contribution of \$10 million** will enable the University to launch the three initiatives highlighted in this proposal:

- **A pioneering MA program in International Relations with a Specialty in Regional Leadership**
- **The establishment of the Joubran Center for Democracy and Human Rights**
- **The launching of an International Judges Academy**