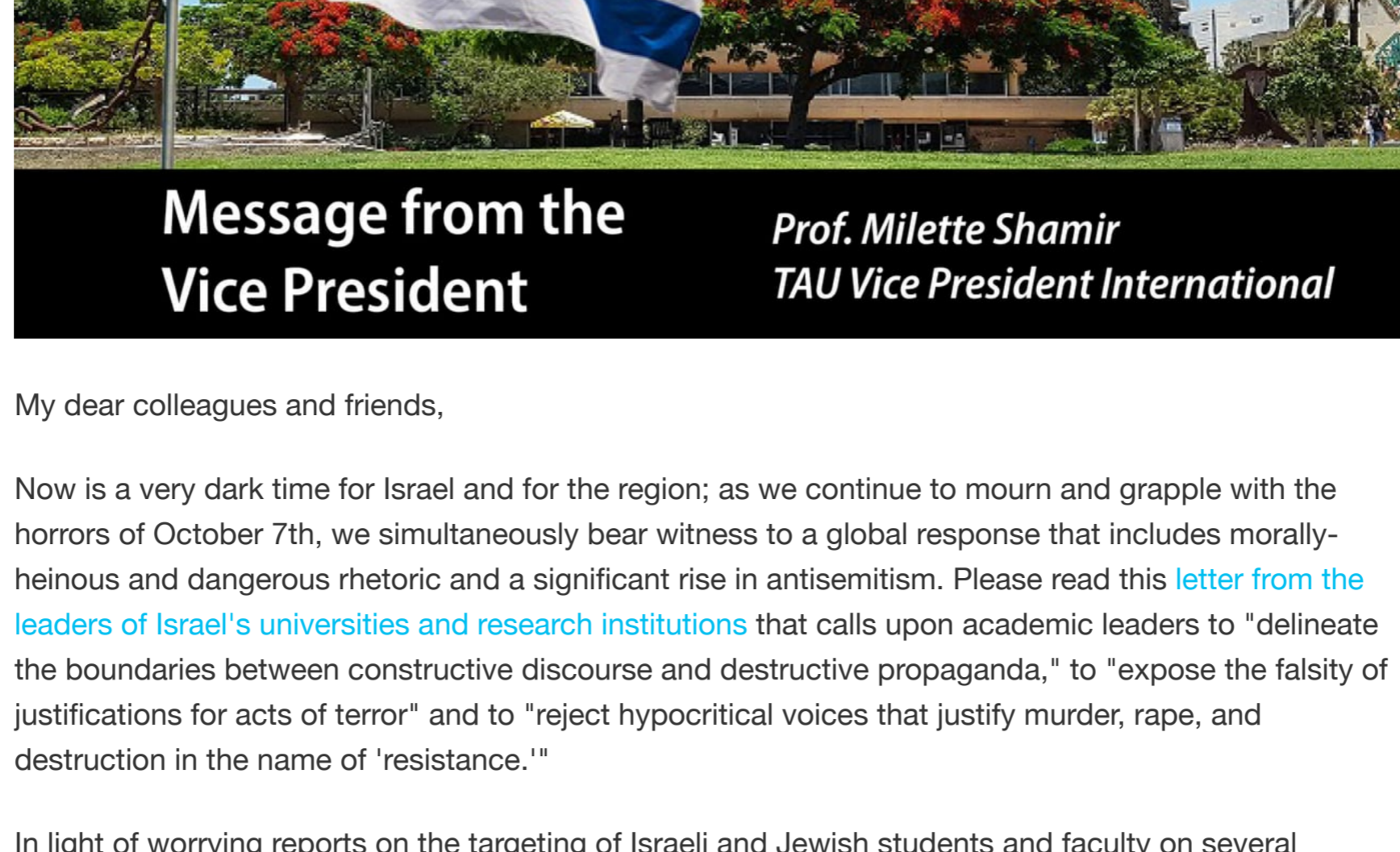


# The Lowy Quarterly

News & updates from TAU's global home, Thursday, November 2, 2023.



My dear colleagues and friends,

Now is a very dark time for Israel and for the region; as we continue to mourn and grapple with the horrors of October 7th, we simultaneously bear witness to a global response that includes morally-heinous and dangerous rhetoric and a significant rise in antisemitism. Please read this [letter from the leaders of Israel's universities and research institutions](#) that calls upon academic leaders to "delineate the boundaries between constructive discourse and destructive propaganda," to "expose the falsity of justifications for acts of terror" and to "reject hypocritical voices that justify murder, rape, and destruction in the name of 'resistance.'"

In light of worrying reports on the targeting of Israeli and Jewish students and faculty on several campuses in the US and Europe, the letter also voices an expectation that these members of the academic community be "accorded the same respect and protections as any other minority." Please consider whether you can better use the tools at your disposal to support Jewish and Israeli members in your academic home.

Concurrently, we at TAU recognize the need to focus on providing our own diverse academic community with the [supports they need to feel safe and secure](#). During this difficult time, we have recognized and responded to the [need for additional resources](#) for our more than 5,000 students who have been called up to the IDF reserves; our local and international students in general; and for those communities who may be feeling especially marginalized right now.

Currently, more than 15% of our student population is Arab-Israeli; we have made it a priority to ensure these students feel safe coming to the University. We instated a zero-tolerance policy toward incitement and hate speech on our campus, regardless of whether these are directed at Jews or Arabs. As with all of our students, we have been offering our Arab-Israeli students a variety of mental health and academic supports, paying particular attention to their unique circumstances. Led by Prof. Neta Ziv, Vice President for Equity, Diversity and Community, TAU has been holding regular group and individual meetings with minority students to better understand and address their concerns. To help shed some light on how TAU's Arab-Israeli students are coping right now, we've included a Q&A with one of our students, Mary, below.

In these challenging times, we must do all we can to support all members of our academic community, and especially those who may be feeling vulnerable. We are facing manifold difficulties and tragedies; however, those with agency have a responsibility to fight hate. By embracing diversity and actively addressing its challenges, we will emerge a stronger, more supportive community when peace is finally restored.

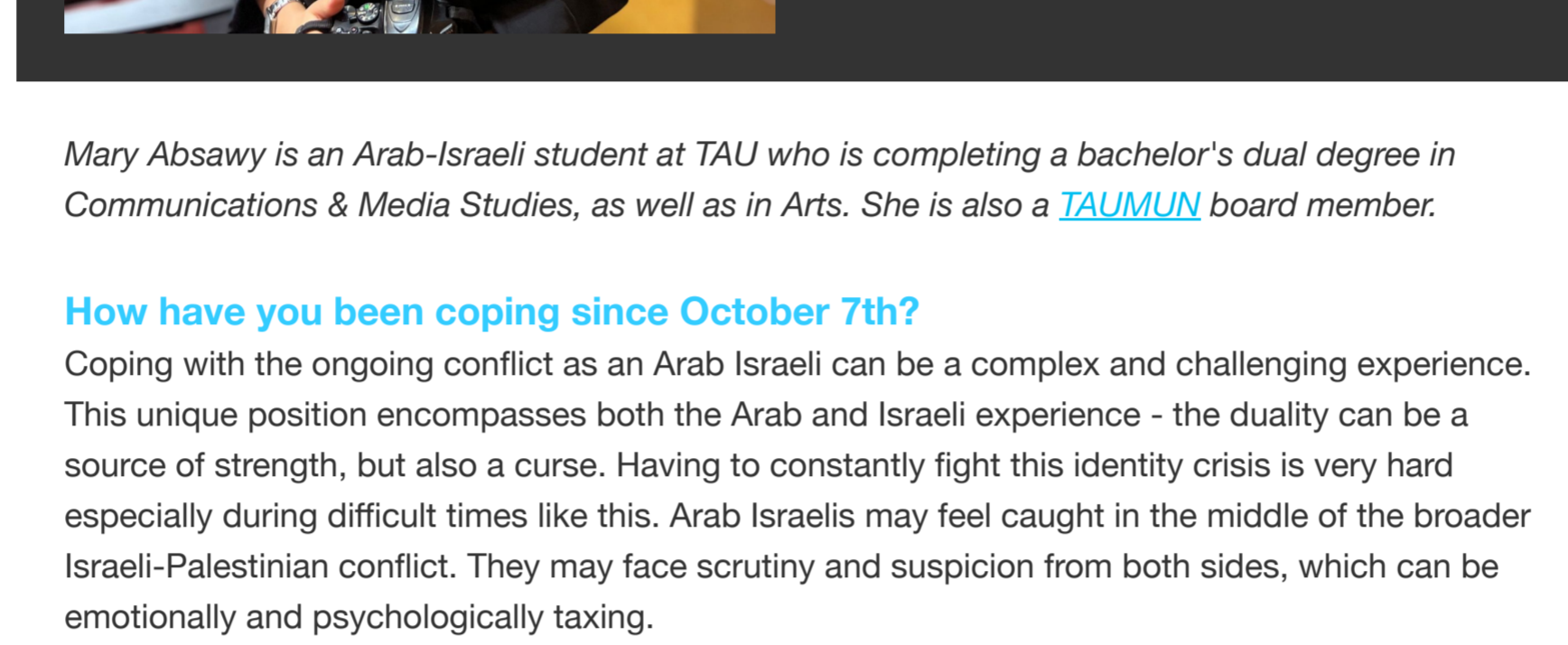
Yours,  
Millette

## Informational Updates

- **New Scholarships for Students in the Reserves** – In addition to emergency relief funds for students and faculty members, as well as grants for soldiers in combat duty, the University is now [immediately awarding grants of 1,000 NIS to the more than 5,000 TAU students who have been called for IDF reserve duty](#).
- **View from TAU** – Haisam Hassanein is an alumnus of TAU's international school, and was the first Egyptian at our University to give a valedictorian speech; [read his reflections on Israel, October 7 and Hamas in the New York Post](#). Regarding Gaza's future, [listen to Charles Freilich's perspective on NPR](#) (Freilich teaches at TAU and Columbia, and is a long-time senior fellow at the Belfer Center at Harvard's Kennedy School); and [read about the five scenarios Michael Milshtein \(TAU's Moshe Dayan Center\) proposed to Deutsche Welle](#).
- **Words of Support** – We're been grateful for the recognition from so many of you. [Read this pledge of support and solidarity from TAU's American School of Medicine alumni](#); and [learn about this coalition of universities standing with Israel and against Hamas](#).
- **Safety** – All members of the international community are instructed to follow the safety procedures in place. Currently, residents of greater Tel Aviv are asked to stay near secure areas. To view a list of safe areas on campus, see our [Safety, Health and Security webpage](#). For more information on safety protocols, see the FAQ below.
- **Mental Health** – TAU is significantly expanding the scope of psychological services available to the university community, including international students. There is a 24/7 mental health support line available, with services in English; if you or someone you know is struggling, please contact the Student Life Team, which is on call 24/7, at 052-5346188.

## Spotlight on Campus

### TAU Perspectives: Q&A



Mary Absawy is an Arab-Israeli student at TAU who is completing a bachelor's dual degree in Communications & Media Studies, as well as in Arts. She is also a TAU/UN board member.

**How have you been coping since October 7th?**  
Coping with the ongoing conflict as an Arab Israeli can be a complex and challenging experience. This unique position encompasses both the Arab and Israeli experience - the duality can be a source of strength, but also a curse. Having to constantly fight this identity crisis is very hard especially during difficult times like this. Arab Israelis may feel caught in the middle of the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They may face scrutiny and suspicion from both sides, which can be emotionally and psychologically taxing.

I am fully aware that I am living in a country affected by conflict, that's why I always remember to seek emotional support. I reach out to my friends and family or to support communities formed on social media to discuss my feelings and concerns, which provides comfort and understanding because we are all going through similar challenges.

The last and most important thing I do is that, while I stay informed, I limit my social media usage; discourses and shared content on social media can be a source of stress so I reduce my exposure to contentious negative content, graphic or distressing images that may increase anxiety, and I consume my safety information about the situation through reliable and unbiased news sources, which is obviously not social media these days....

**What has your experience been, as both an Arab Israeli and a TAU student?**  
As we all know, universities are disrupted due to the security challenges and this disruption directly impacts the educational pursuits of us students and it delays our academic progress.

Genuinely speaking, I am thankful to my younger self for choosing to study at Tel Aviv University. I think that you get to appreciate the university you are studying at, and you get to experience its actual value, during difficult times like this. All academic and director teams have shown solidarity and extensive support for their students, taking into consideration the Arabs among them. Having academic support, knowing that you have something to lean on during these uncertain times, provides a sense of certainty and serenity.

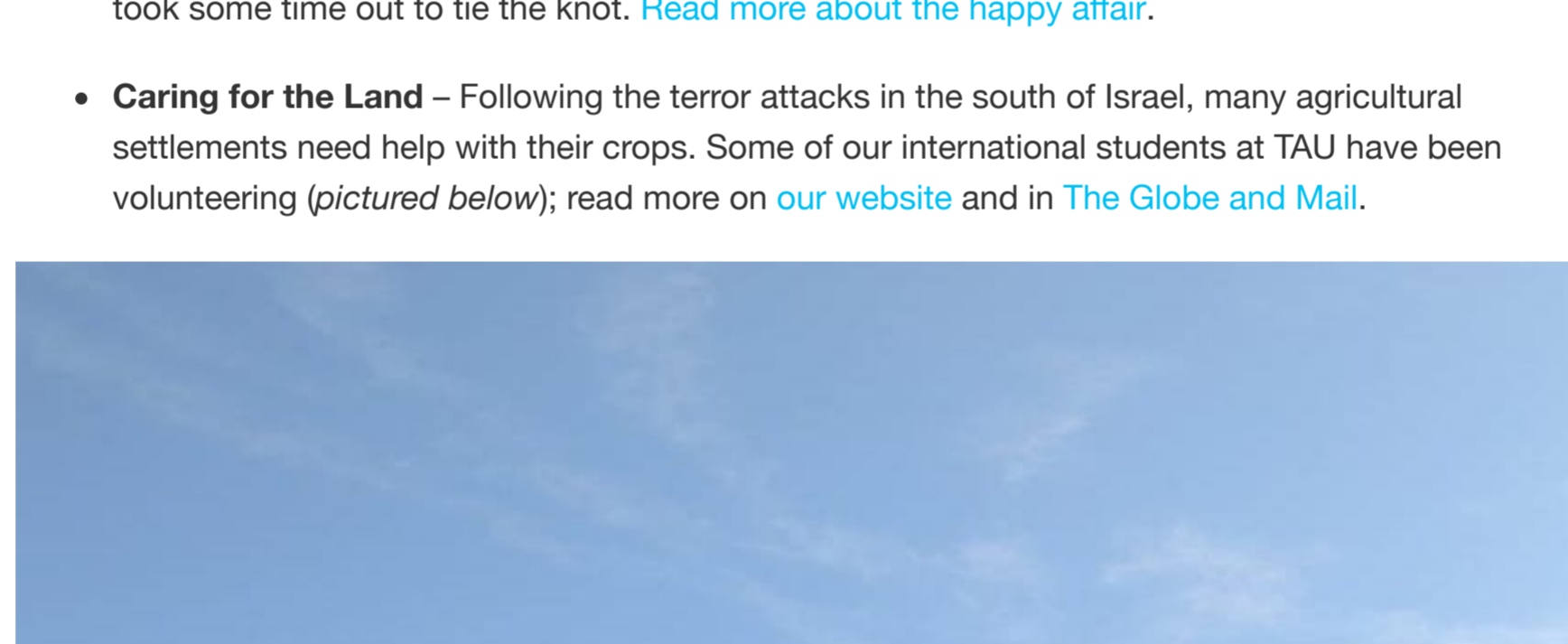
**How would you describe your life right now as an Arab Israeli?**  
This is a complex scenario. I am mostly feeling helpless. As an Arab Israeli, I feel that I have little control over the situation, which leads me to frustration and hopelessness. It is mostly looking at the situation from a side-view perspective, but I cannot touch it or do anything about it.

I want to share my thoughts, I want to speak up for humanity, I want to speak up for the people, but I can't. Going to work or university, shopping, and even simple tasks like visiting friends or family would become more challenging or impossible. I might be targeted by extremists living around me just for being an Arab in light of the ongoing conflict, although I am Israeli. This makes me live with a pervasive sense of anxiety.

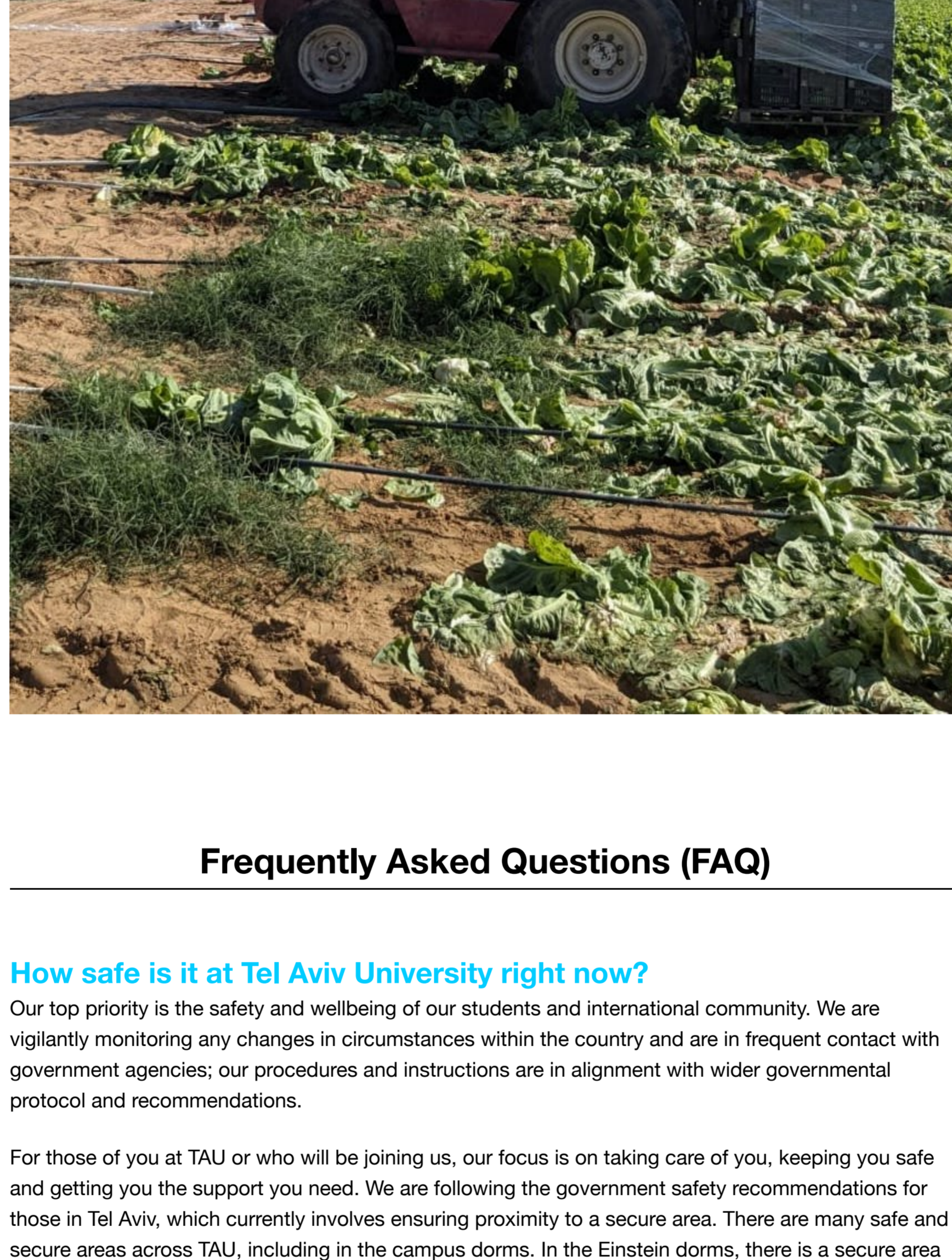
The unpredictability of war, including air raids, missile attacks, and the general instability, is just exhausting, knowing that I can also fall in an attack by Arabs from the other side. Let's not forget the constant concern for the well-being of my family members on the one hand with every siren going off, and on the other hand my Jewish Israeli friends who are currently serving in the military and can be gone in a blink of an eye. It's just this duality that is taking a toll on my mental health.

**With so much attention on this region of the world right now, is there something you feel that the media reporting is missing?**  
I personally think that uplifting and comforting content is missing. For instance, international media is focused on the broader political and military aspects of the conflict, but the everyday experiences and perspectives of local people, including civilians living in the affected areas, can be underrepresented. Showcasing these lost and often forgotten perspectives can provide some sense of relief to other people; it proves that everyone is going through difficulties, and nobody is alone or different - we are all humans at the end of the day. May I also remind everyone that people in general should refrain from consuming war information on social media, and should go back to regular "trusted" media during these times, because it seems more reliable regardless.

## Campus Activities



- **Shabbat Dinners** – Each Shabbat, we've been bringing together international students with Sderot refugees temporarily living on campus for some warm conversation and food. These dinners are happening in our miflat, which is a secure area ([pictured above](#)).
- **Back to School** – Wondering what it's like to be an international student these days at TAU? [Read Lary French's experience](#) of moving to Tel Aviv on October 5th and starting his classes in the [International Master's of Disaster Management program](#).
- **Students Call for Peace** – The TAU international students' task force has written an open letter for students around the world, which condemns hate speech, the rise of false information and the rise in antisemitism around the world. Are you a university student or know one? We encourage you to [sign the letter](#) and to ask others to sign, too!
- **Love in the Time of War** – While TAU postdoctoral researchers Talia Pearl (School of Zoology) and Uri Shahar (Faculty of Exact Sciences) have both been drafted into the reserves, they also took some time out to tie the knot. [Read more about the happy affair](#).
- **Caring for the Land** – Following the terror attacks in the south of Israel, many agricultural settlements need help with their crops. Some of our international students at TAU have been volunteering ([pictured below](#)); read more on [our website](#) and in [The Globe and Mail](#).



## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

**How safe is it at Tel Aviv University right now?**  
Our top priority is the safety and wellbeing of our students and international community. We are vigilantly monitoring any changes in circumstances within the country and are in frequent contact with government agencies; our procedures and instructions are in alignment with wider governmental protocol and recommendations.

For those of you at TAU or who will be joining us, our focus is on taking care of you, recommending you safe and getting you the support you need. We are following the government safety recommendations for those in Tel Aviv, which currently involves ensuring proximity to a secure area. There are many safe and secure areas across TAU, including in the campus dorms. In the Einstein dorms, there is a secure area between building A and B; in the Broshim complex, there is a secure apartment (whose number starts with 01) on each floor of each building. A list of safe areas can be found [here](#).

Additionally, while we will be continuing with all academic programs, we have implemented a hybrid format for the beginnings of term, to prioritize safety and provide a flexible learning environment. Once safety and circumstances allow, we will resume more extracurricular activities.

**What is day-to-day life like?**  
While we are limiting extracurricular activities and focusing on safety, we are also doing our best to support the wellbeing of our students on campus. For any students joining us, housing options in the dormitories remain unchanged, and students have 24/7 access to the Student Life Team to help with any questions or adjustments to day-to-day life. There are also mental health supports available.

We are currently organizing small gathering opportunities in accordance with current official guidelines and protocol. The term for international students began on October 22 in a hybrid format, and we will resume planned extracurricular activities and in-person classes when appropriate.

While Israel has experienced an unprecedented tragedy, we are also all very touched by the ways in which the TAU community has rallied together to support each other and Israel. Now is a time for care and kindness, and this sentiment is also very much felt on campus.

**Are there currently restrictions on educational or extracurricular activities?**  
Currently there are restrictions on both educational and extracurricular activities.

The term for international students began on Sunday, October 22 and classes will continue to be offered through a hybrid format to prioritize safety and provide flexibility.

Regarding extracurricular activities, all gatherings are following current governmental protocol (no more than 50 people gathered inside and 10 people outside) and are taking place in secure areas. In general, any excursions organized by The Lowy International School are cleared by the Israeli National Security Center and the Ministry of Education and coordinated with appropriate authorities (including Israeli police and army); we do not allow trips to any areas prohibited or deemed unsafe.

**I need help with arranging travel/ordering food/getting mail or other day-to-day arrangements. Whom can I contact to help?**  
The Student Life Team is on call 24/7 and is here to assist regarding all day-to-day matters. The team can be contacted at 052-5346188.

**What security measures are in place at the university?**  
The Lowy International School maintains frequent contact with government security agencies to stay informed of any potential escalations or risks on the horizon. In preparation for an emergency situation, all students receive safety training during orientation, a welcome kit with safety information, as well as regular communications. TAU maintains 24/7 security and staffing on campus and in the dormitories. For security reasons, anyone entering campus is required to show a student ID card or other form of ID and have their bags searched. Additionally, no one is permitted to enter a dormitory without a clearance chip (FOB).

Regarding the current circumstance in Israel, we are following the government safety instructions for those in Tel Aviv, which includes ensuring proximity to a secure area. There are many safe and secure areas across TAU, including in the campus dorms.

When an emergency situation arises, our priority is on contacting everyone promptly. The steps we take depend on the type of emergency; our school requires that all students carry a working mobile phone with an Israeli number, and we maintain student social-media groups such as a WhatsApp group. We also employ a buddy system.

Our [Safety, Health and Security](#) webpage provides greater details on approaches we would take should there be an emergency.

**What do I do if I hear a siren?**  
Sirens are part of the "Iron Dome" system in Israel, which alert and protect us at any given time.

When a siren is heard in Tel Aviv (where the University is located), you have approximately 1.5 minutes to make your way to a secure area. Once the siren stops, you should spend 10 additional minutes within the secure area. We also recommend that all members of our international community download the Home Front Command app, which will send push notifications in case a siren goes off around your location.

There are secure areas across TAU's campus and in the Einstein dorms, there is a secure area between building A and B; in the Broshim complex, there is a secure apartment (whose number starts with 01) on each floor of each building. A list of safe areas can be found [here](#).

**I'm feeling anxious and scared. What should I do?**  
We want to emphasize that seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness. It takes courage to acknowledge when you are struggling and to ask for help. We are here to provide you with the resources you need to prioritize your mental health. If you are struggling, please contact the Student Life Team at 052-5346188. They are on call 24/7. There is also a TAU mental health support line available 24/7. In the morning, you can contact psychological services at 03-6408505, or otherwise, at any time, leave a short WhatsApp message with your name and number at +972-50-2787037 and a psychotherapist will contact you.

In addition to seeking support, we encourage you to practice self-care, maintain a healthy lifestyle and connect with others. We recognize this may be a difficult time and we are here to help you.

**I'd really appreciate meeting and being with other people right now. How can I do this?**  
We understand the need to be with people at this time, and the Student Life Team is organizing small gatherings in secure areas, in accordance with guidelines. Please reach out to the Student Life Team at 052-5346188. You are not alone.

**What happens if things escalate in Israel?**  
Our top priority is the safety and wellbeing of our students and international community. We are vigilantly monitoring any changes to the circumstances in the country and are in frequent contact with government agencies. Should circumstances in Israel escalate and should there be a need for a change in protocol, we will communicate this to our international community. News updates regarding how the current situation in Israel is impacting The Lowy International School can be found on the [Important Updates in Light of the Security Situation](#) webpage.

While we will always reach out to our international students and researchers directly, subscribing to this newsletter is otherwise one of the best ways to receive any updates on changes in protocol for The Lowy International School.

**What should I do if I don't want to be at TAU?**  
We want to emphasize that we respect and support any decision made regarding your time with us at Tel Aviv University. Whether you decide to stay, return home temporarily or leave indefinitely, we will cooperate and assist with the necessary arrangements. We recommend contacting the Student Life Team for further assistance.

**What should I do in case of an emergency?**  
In the case of an emergency, The Lowy International School will be in direct contact with international students about next steps.

Please visit our [Safety, Health and Security](#) webpage on the steps that should be taken should there be an emergency. Additionally, key emergency and mental health contacts can be found on this page.