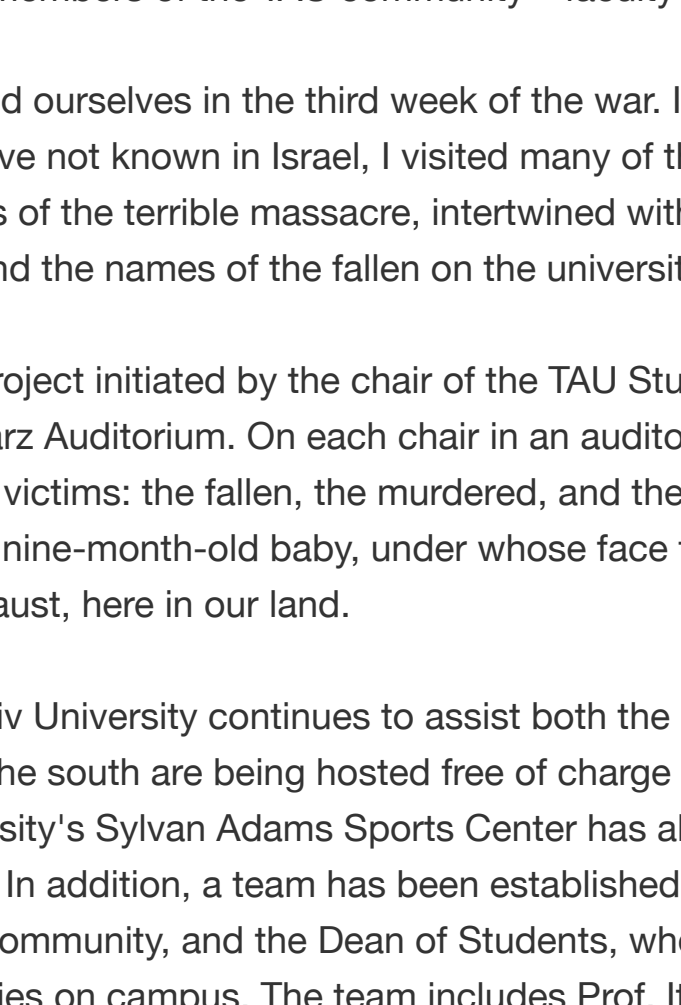




The Lowy Quarterly

News & updates from TAU's global home, Tuesday, October 24, 2023.



Message from the President

Prof. Ariel Porat
President of Tel Aviv University

Dear members of the TAU community – faculty and staff, students, and loyal friends,

We find ourselves in the third week of the war. In these days of mourning and sorrow, the likes of which we have not known in Israel, I visited many of the bereaved families from the university community. The events of the terrible massacre, intertwined with stories of bravery and sacrifice, leave no dry eye. You can find the names of the fallen on the university's [memorial page](#). Our hearts are with their families.

In a project initiated by the chair of the TAU Student Union, we created a [memorial exhibit](#) at our Smolatz Auditorium. On each chair in an auditorium of over a thousand seats, there is a picture of one of the victims: the fallen, the murdered, and the captive. It is hard to divert your eyes from the image of Kfir, a nine-month-old baby, under whose face the word "hostage" appears. We experienced a holocaust, here in our land.

Tel Aviv University continues to assist both the residents of the south and the overall war effort. Families from the south are being hosted free of charge in the student dormitories, with more on the way. The university's Sylvan Adams Sports Center has also opened its doors to evacuees from the south and north. In addition, a team has been established to work with the Vice President for Equality, Diversity, and Community, and the Dean of Students, whose joint role is to manage and promote volunteer activities on campus. The team includes Prof. Itai Ater (Coller School of Management), Prof. Liat Mudrik (School of Psychological Sciences), and Prof. Michal Feldman (Blavatnik School of Computer Science).

In addition to activities that I reported in an [update](#) a week ago, we are currently recruiting volunteers to assist communities in the south in general, and those surrounding Gaza in particular. Members of the university community went to volunteer in moshav Ein-Habesor. A few days ago, I visited our own Prof. Yiftach Gepner from the Faculty of Medicine, whose brother was injured in the terrorist attack there. In the heat of the moment, Yiftach managed to rescue his brother, who is now recovering in the hospital. We hope to send additional volunteers to other communities in the south in the coming days.

The university campus is functioning, but unfortunately without many of its students. It is important not to leave our reserve soldiers behind either financially or academically! Students called up to serve have been exempted from rent at the university dormitories for the month of October (it should be noted that the dormitories are not owned by the University), and all TAU students have had their tuition fee payments postponed. Through the Student Success Center, and thanks to our generous donors, we are working to provide student reservists with additional financial aid both for now and for when they return from the war. Our students from the south will also receive assistance from the Dean of Students in cases of economic need.

One last, very important issue that I want to address is incitement on campus. Our nerves are raw; the pain and anger affect us all. But precisely because of this, and because of who we are, we must act responsibly. We take very seriously any campus expressions of solidarity with Hamas terrorists. The TAU Rector recently distributed a letter clarifying that TAU will take a firm hand – within the limits of the law and university regulations – against these instigators, whose numbers are less than a handful. In the same vein, we must strongly denounce the shocking claim being made here and around the world, including on some university campuses in the US, that the Hamas massacre is a "political issue" about which differing views can be expressed under freedom of speech. There can be no greater mistake. There is no difference between this claim and the claim that the Holocaust is a controversial political issue that is open to legitimate debate.

At the same time, we are facing a worrisome phenomenon of incitement via social media, most probably by people outside the university community, against Arab students. False stories and baseless rumors are being spread about Arab students supposedly identifying with Hamas. We, the Jews, who have suffered blood libels for hundreds of years, need to be especially sensitive to this. Incitement against Arab students who have done no harm is wicked and cowardly. Not only does it harm the innocent, but it also endangers our national resilience, cohesion and security. We must condemn and distance ourselves from those inciting against the innocent. Please refrain from cooperating with them and think for a moment before forwarding posts that may not be true. This difficult period requires that we all exercise social responsibility.

Returning to campus and normal life will not be easy. The terrible personal and collective pain will not quickly subside. But like a phoenix rising from the ashes, we will rise and continue onward.

Yours sincerely,

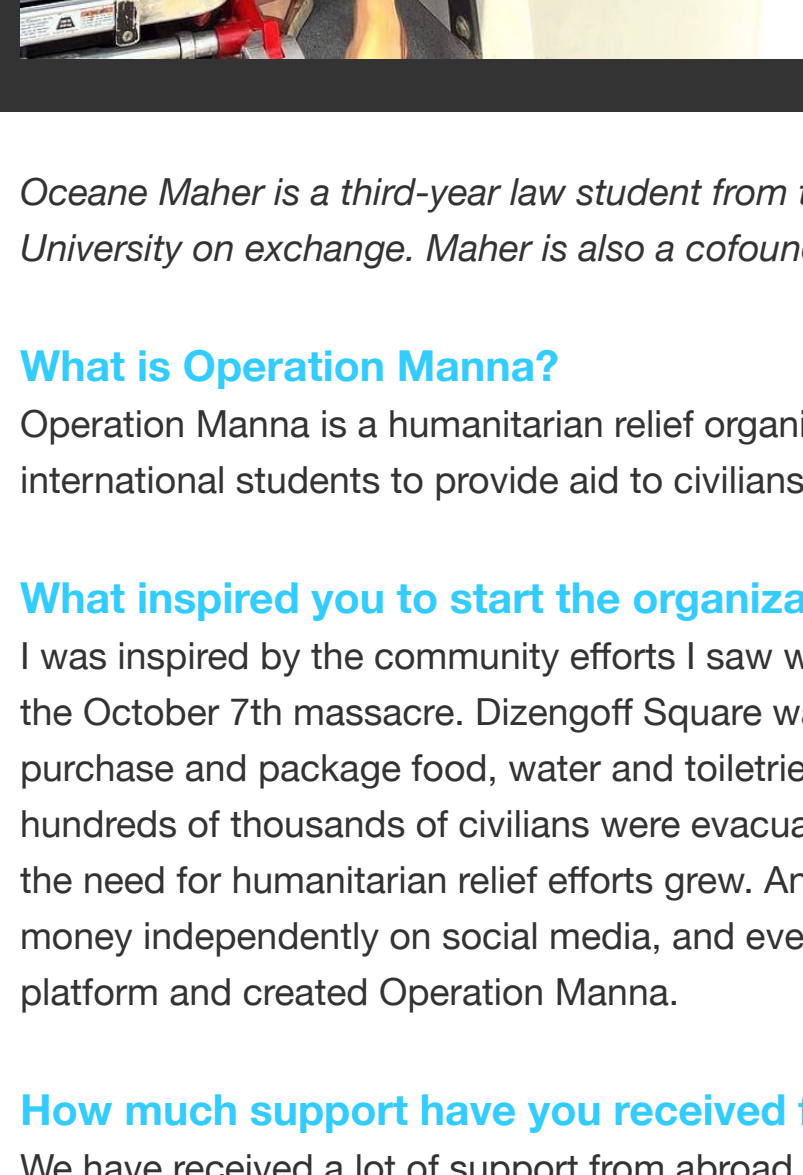
Ariel Porat

Informational Updates

- **Start of Term** – Israeli universities have now postponed the beginning of the academic term (excluding for international degree programs) to December, given "the state of war and the high percentage of conscripts into the reserves among the students and faculty." The official start date will be specified at least two weeks in advance. The term for international degree programs at Tel Aviv University began on Sunday, October 22.
- **View from TAU** – Regarding the Israel-Hamas war, our experts continue to be in the news. [Watch Harel Chorev \(Moshe Dayan Center\)](#) talk to CNN on what a multilateral operation against Hamas could look like; [read Prof. Mark Weiser's \(TAU Faculty of Medicine\) review](#) of mental health responses; [listen to a podcast with Tuvia Gering](#) (graduate of TAU's [Emergency & Disaster Management master's](#)) on China's foreign policy in context; and [view this open letter from Israeli peace activists and progressives](#) (signed by a number of TAU professors).
- **Words of Support** – We've been grateful for the words of kindness from many of you. [Read some of the messages we've received](#).
- **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

The TAU Perspective: Q&As



Oceane Maher
*Exchange Student/
Operation Manna
Cofounder*

Oceane Maher is a third-year law student from the University of Texas, who is here at Tel Aviv University on exchange. Maher is also a cofounder of the non-profit Operation Manna.

What is Operation Manna?

Operation Manna is a humanitarian relief organization started by myself and two other international students to provide aid to civilians displaced by the war.

What inspired you to start the organization?

I was inspired by the community efforts I saw when I woke up on Sunday morning, the day after the October 7th massacre. Dizengoff Square was full of volunteers who were pitching in to help purchase and package food, water and toiletries for soldiers and civilians from the south. As hundreds of thousands of civilians were evacuated from their homes over the past couple weeks, the need for humanitarian relief efforts grew. Another exchange student and I started raising money independently on social media, and eventually we decided to make a more official platform and created Operation Manna.

How much support have you received for Operation Manna?

We have received a lot of support from abroad. So many people want to contribute but feel they can't do anything from afar – Operation Manna has provided a way for them to directly contribute to providing direct aid to civilians impacted by the war. We've raised about \$15,000 (NIS 60,000) so far.

Is there a particular moment that made you really feel validated?

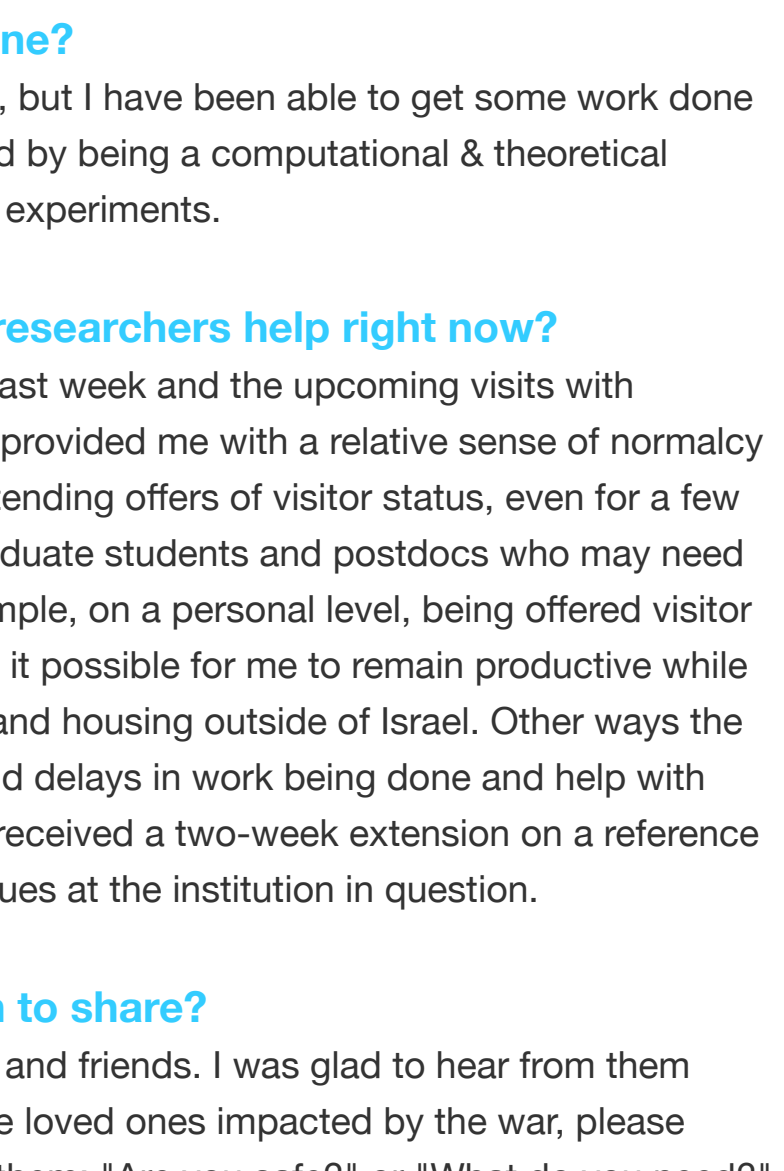
A few days ago we were out shopping for supplies for displaced families, and we filled a cart full of baby food. A woman looked at our cart and asked if we had a big family. We told her it was for the babies who have been evacuated from the south and the north, and her eyes immediately filled with tears and she thanked us for what we were doing. We've had a lot of moments like this, and it feels amazing to be able to contribute in some way during this incredibly difficult time.

How can people contribute to Operation Manna?

They can donate to our relief efforts [here](#), and follow & share our story on [Instagram](#).

Dr. Joshua Macdonald

Postdoctoral Fellow



Dr. Joshua Macdonald is a Zuckerman Postdoctoral Fellow in mathematics. Holding a PhD from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Macdonald is currently working with the School of Zoology at Tel Aviv University.

Are you at TAU or abroad at the moment?

I was at TAU until Monday, October 16th. I am now visiting collaborators at the University of Warwick in the UK and will be heading to the US (where I'm from) on the 29th and staying there until at least November 11th. While in the US, I will visit other collaborators and attend a conference. During the week of the 11th, I will assess the situation in Israel in consultation with my lab's PI and decide between returning or continuing my postdoc remotely until the situation calms again.

How have you been coping since October 7, 2023?

The first week was difficult; I was constantly reading the news. I live between Gaza and the airport, so the sirens went off many times – including a couple of close hits in Jaffa and Shapira. Those of us from the US, Canada, and Western Europe are not raised with the possibility of such a situation and are perhaps not as well equipped to handle it as Israelis. I am, of course, horrified by the events of October 7th and everything that has happened since – the loss of so many lives is a tragedy. That said, I do not have family in Israel and was fortunate to have no friends who were either kidnapped or murdered, though several of my lab mates do. The rise of antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents worldwide is also highly concerning, as is the possibility of further escalation in the region. Now, almost two weeks into the Gaza war, I am still keeping track of events, but I have been able to refocus on work in the last week or so.

Are you managing to get any research done?

I had a tough time focusing on work the first week, but I have been able to get some work done in the last week or so. My ability to refocus is aided by being a computational & theoretical biologist, so I do not need to conduct fieldwork or experiments.

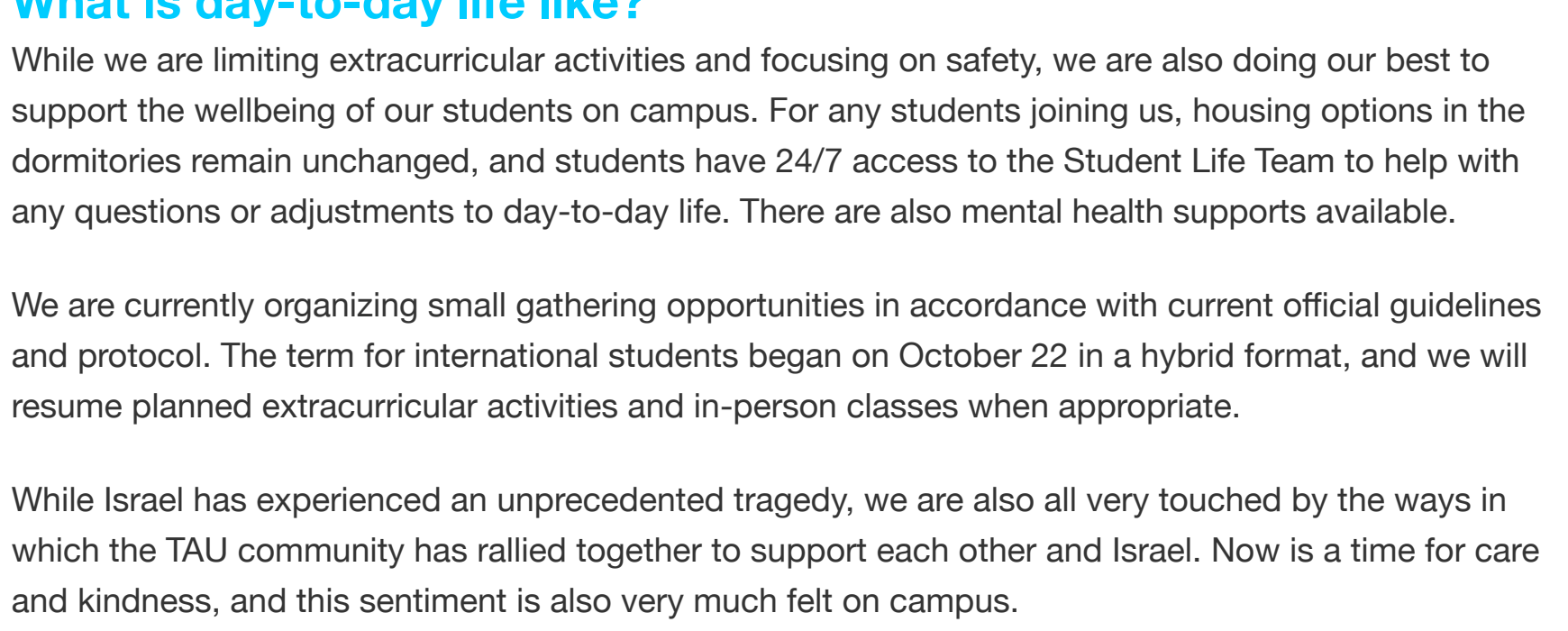
How can the international community of researchers help right now?

The ability to visit collaborators at Warwick in the last week and the upcoming visits with collaborators in the US in the coming weeks have provided me with a relative sense of normalcy that has facilitated my ability to return to work. Extending offers of visitor status, even for a few weeks, is especially important for international graduate students and postdocs who may need assistance to relocate from Israel quickly. For example, on a personal level, being offered visitor status and help finding accommodation has made it possible for me to remain productive while not worrying about issues such as transportation and housing outside of Israel. Other ways the international community can help are to understand delays in work being done and help with extensions on essential deadlines. For example, I received a two-week extension on a reference letter submission deadline with the help of colleagues at the institution in question.

Do you have any other message you wish to share?

While in Israel, I heard from many family members and friends. I was glad to hear from them and their support meant a lot. However, if you have loved ones impacted by the war, please consider how you communicate when contacting them: "Are you safe?" or "What do you need?" is excellent. Please don't ask about specific events, as this makes it more difficult to not hyperfocus on everything that is happening.

On-Campus Activities



- **Emergency Medical Training** – With regular studies on hold, TAU's medical students (*pictured above*) are now [brushing up on their emergency medical training](#) using simulator manikins.
- **United Against Terrorism** – An [exhibit in TAU's Smolatz Auditorium](#) memorializing those missing, kidnapped and murdered as a result of the October 7 attacks has received significant global attention, including from [CNN](#), [The New York Times](#) and the [CBC](#).
- **International Student Life** – Our gatherings are quieter and smaller, but we still appreciate being together. [See what some of our international students have been up to lately](#).

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, keeping 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 beginning 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 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](#).

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.

CONTACT US

The Lowy International School
Tel Aviv University
Carter Building
Ramat Aviv
Israel, 6997801

Tel: +972-73-3804534

study@taux.tau.ac.il

[View our offices in your country](#)

