

The Lowy Quarterly

News & updates from TAU's global home. Thursday, December 14, 2023.



Dear friends and colleagues,

As we continue to light candles for Hanukkah, many of us in Israel and in communities around the world are thinking about the power of a flame in the face of darkness and shadow. It is no coincidence that most holidays celebrated during this season feature candles, whether it be Hanukkah, Advent or Kwanzaa. When we face dark times – as we in Israel have since October 7 – it is so often the people in our community who become our light in the darkness and who help us see hope grow day by day.

Academic ties form an elaborate and extensive global network with immense potential to offer solidarity and aid during times of crisis. In recent years, we have seen this network mobilized to help scholars at risk in Afghanistan and to support students and colleagues in Ukraine. We in Israel have been thinking a lot about the significance of this network of relationships and the value of international collaboration. As we continue to grapple with these challenging times, your words of support have truly been our light. It means a lot to us to have you by our side, as we work to confront the complexities of the present and dedicate ourselves to a more interconnected and empathetic global community and future.

Please know that we value you deeply as friends and partners, and we look forward to continuing our shared journey in the coming year.

Warmest wishes for a Happy Hanukkah, a Merry Christmas, a Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year.

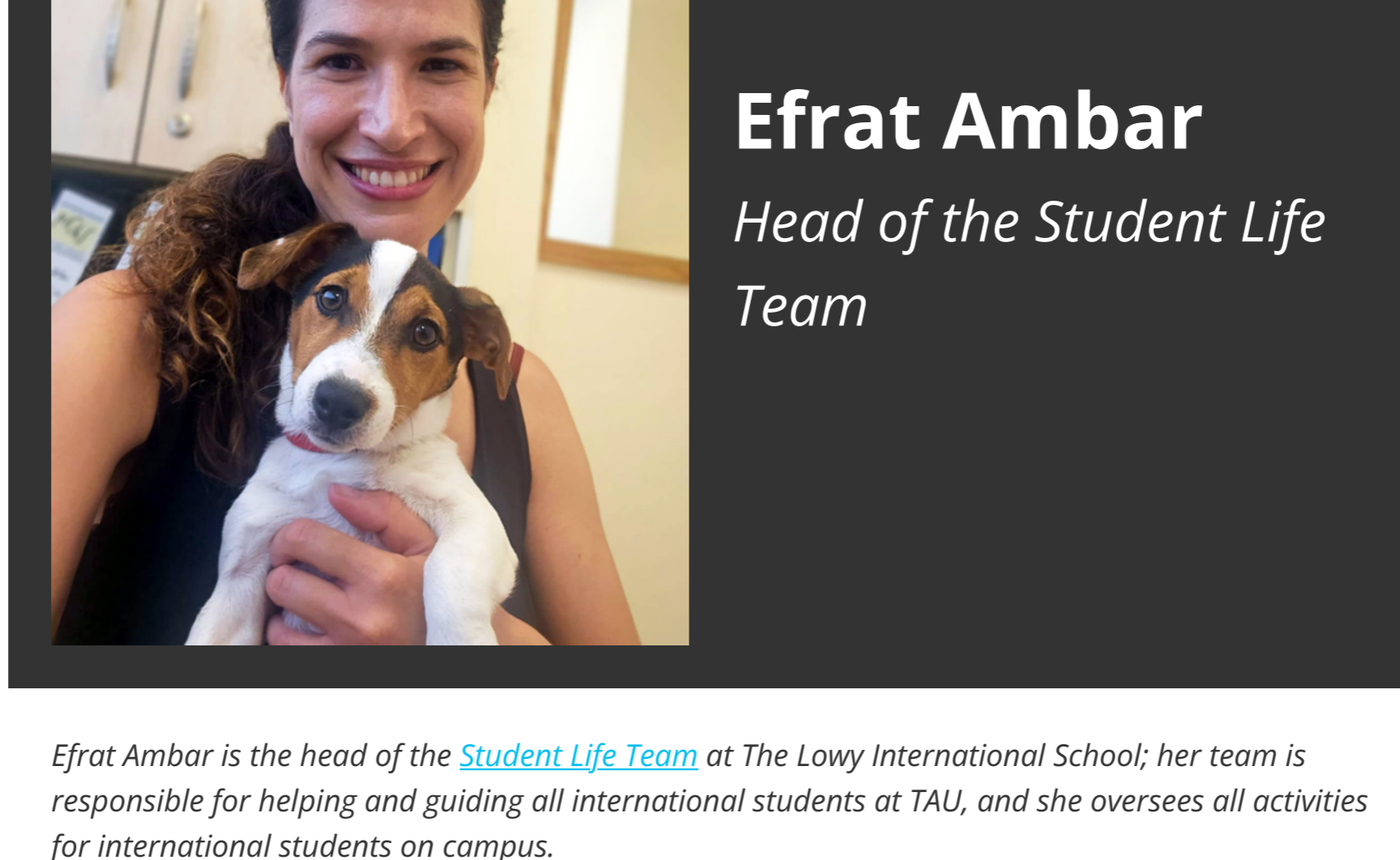
Yours,
Millette

Informational Updates

- **Start of Term** – While classes for international students are well underway, the academic term for Israeli students, including at Tel Aviv University (TAU), is now set to [begin on December 31, 2023](#).
- **Remembering Yonatan Haim** – Yonatan was a student in our International Program in Emergency & Disaster Management in 2020-21 and went on to serve as a lone soldier in the Combat Engineering Corps' 603rd Battalion of the IDF. He fell in combat in Gaza at the age of 25. [We are heartbroken and thinking of Yonatan's family and friends.](#)
- **New Course on Israel-Hamas War** – TAU has provided the [first course to be offered on the war](#), with a focus on multidisciplinary perspectives to launch a nuanced approach to the conflict.
- **Outgoing Exchange** – The [call for applications](#) is now open for TAU undergraduate and graduate students looking to go on exchange in fall 2024.
- **Statement on Campus Antisemitism** – The Association of University Heads in Israel [published this letter](#) in response to statements made by American university presidents during a recent congressional hearing.
- **View from TAU** – Sonya Poznansky, a student in the Columbia University-TAU dual degree program, [writes for Newsweek](#) about her experiences since October 7; Harel Chorev, from the Moshe Dayan Center, [provides some context to CNN](#) regarding Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar; and Julie Cooper, from the Department of Political Science, [explores in the Los Angeles Review of Books](#) the possibility of a more just politics after the historical rupture on October 7.

Spotlight on Campus

TAU Perspectives: Q&A



Efrat Ambar is the head of the [Student Life Team](#) at The Lowy International School; her team is responsible for helping and guiding all international students at TAU, and she oversees all activities for international students on campus.

How would you say your role has shifted since October 7?
The day the war started was the same day that international students were scheduled to arrive at TAU (October 8). No one knew what was going on and we had to react very quickly. We had a semester's worth of scheduled activities and that all changed in a moment. We're still in reaction mode today, and we're really focusing on ensuring wellbeing and safety. I'm more in touch personally with students than I usually am because I want to make sure they know who to call and come to if they need help. At the same time, we're holding activities on campus as much as we can to provide that sense of belonging and community for our students.

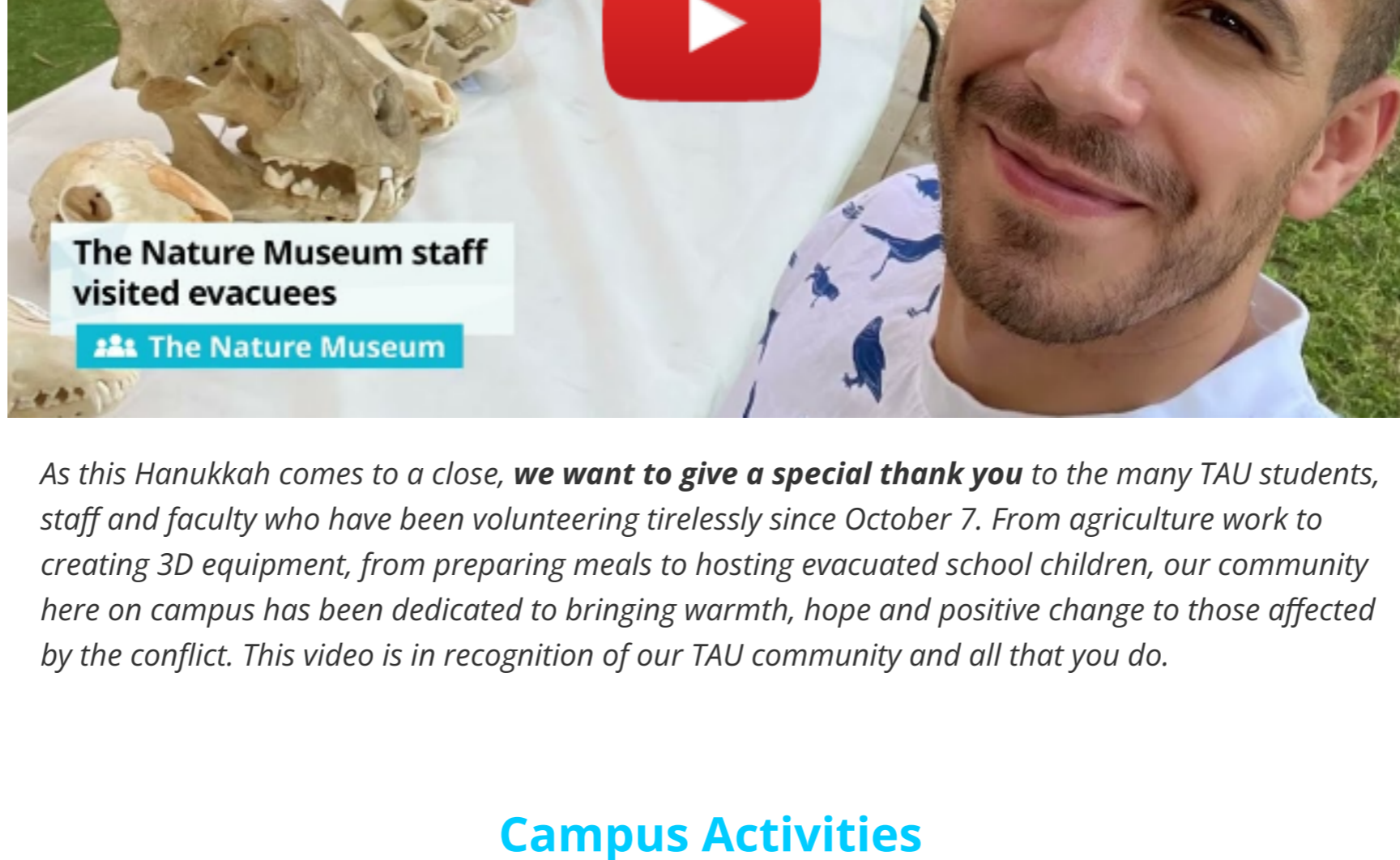
Student life on campus must be very unique these days, given the war. Can you describe your experience with the current cohort of international TAU students?
We have a very diverse student body, but at the same time many of them have a special motive for choosing to stay on campus here with us. We have a number of Jewish students here who really feel a special connection with Israel right now; we have students from the disaster management program who say there's no better time to be here to study; and we have a student from Denmark who said she would still rather be in Tel Aviv than in the snow. Also, there are a number of students who simply decided that coming and staying was the best choice for them. We're really happy they're all here with us; they are a very special group.

This year's cohort on campus also tends to be enthusiastic about joining events. We're holding gatherings in the dorms and on campus, events with special guests, yoga classes, movie nights, Shabbat dinners, picnics and tours – options that allow us to continue to be safe – and we almost always have a great turnout. Even when we hold something like a trivia night, 25 students will come out. We really do have a great group of engaged students.

What would you say has been the highlight of your job these past couple of months?
I was asked to create a WhatsApp group for lone soldiers who are studying in TAU's international programs, and I decided to call each of them personally. I remember one student, in particular – he was just so positive and charming, and he made me laugh so much. He also said he was heading into Gaza the very next day. I can't tell you how kind and happy he was, how he made my day.

Do you have a holiday wish?
My wish is to see all the students back at TAU, and for all the soldiers to come back, and for all the hostages to come back, too. I'm not sure it's possible to wish for anything else these days. We really can't wait to have all our students back with us; we've planned a lot for them, and we miss them here.

A Holiday Thank You

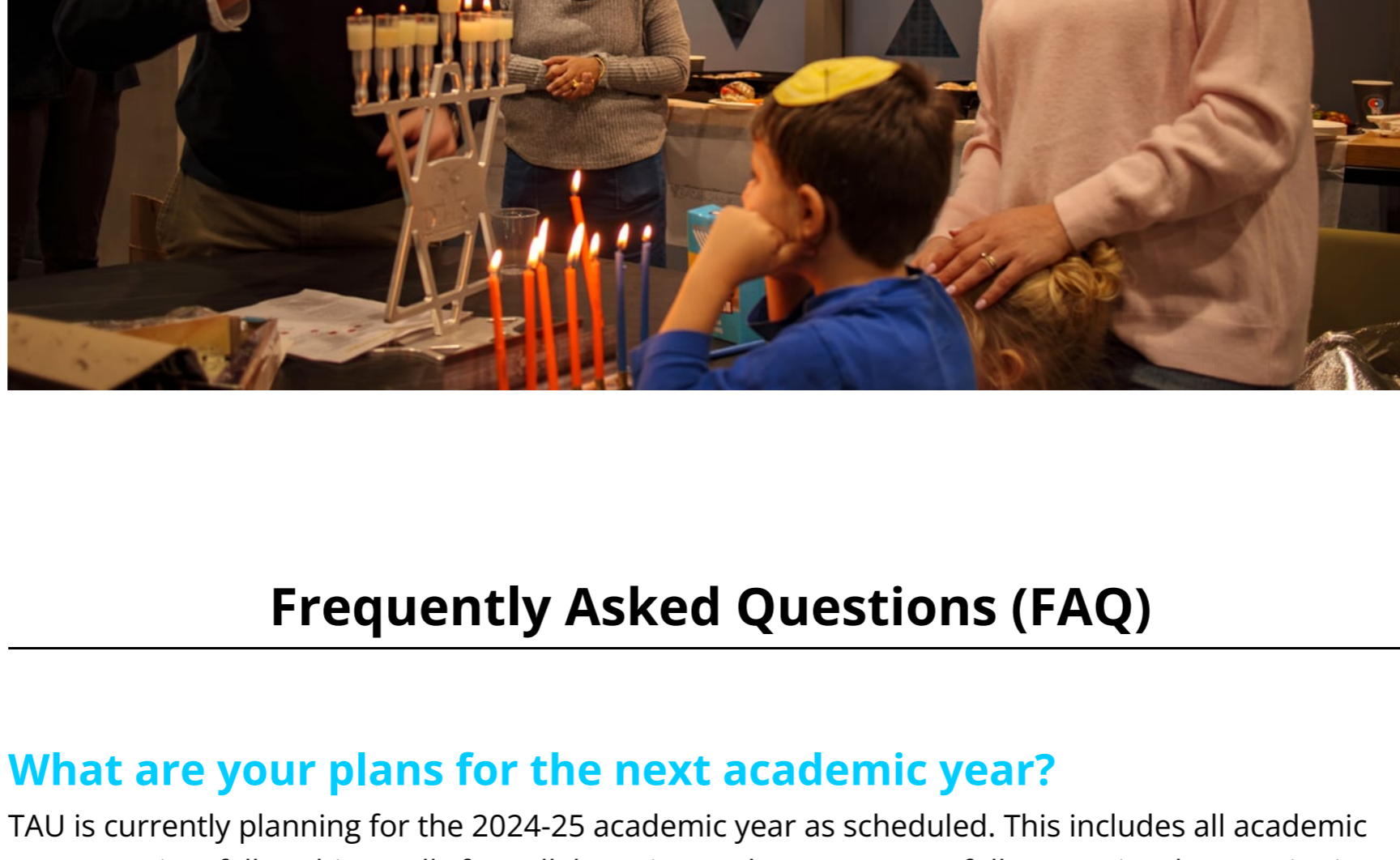


*As this Hanukkah comes to a close, **we want to give a special thank you** to the many TAU students, staff and faculty who have been volunteering tirelessly since October 7. From agriculture work to creating 3D equipment, from preparing meals to hosting evacuated school children, our community here on campus has been dedicated to bringing warmth, hope and positive change to those affected by the conflict. This video is in recognition of our TAU community and all that you do.*

Campus Activities



- **Lowy Moves to a New Space** – The Lowy International School is now located in the beautiful and historic "Green House" building on campus at [24 Dr. George Wise Street](#). We were very excited to greet the first student to visit us [here](#) (pictured above).
- **A Voice for Israeli Women** – Students from TAU's David and Yolanda Katz Faculty of Arts participated in a music video for Gal de Paz's "Bring Them Home" – a song responding to the lack of acknowledgement by UN Women regarding Hamas' violence against Israeli women.
- **New Mental Health Clinic** – TAU is [opening a new national post-trauma clinic](#) on campus, which will provide treatment for the rising cases of PTSD caused by the Hamas attack and the war.
- **A United Nation** – Thanks to the efforts of TAU's Nechumi Yaffe, the "Unity War Rooms" is a [14,000-member ultra-Orthodox initiative](#) focused on cooking meals and procuring goods for Israeli soldiers, providing support to families of Hamas victims, and helping farms and other workplaces in Israel that are short-staffed.
- **Celebrating the Festival of Lights** – The Lowy International School, in collaboration with the Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus (JLIC), held a candle-lighting ceremony with international students to celebrate Hanukkah (pictured below).



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What are your plans for the next academic year?
TAU is currently planning for the 2024-25 academic year as scheduled. This includes all academic programming, fellowships, calls for collaboration and more. We are fully committed to continuing the tradition of academic excellence at our University and have exciting new programs and projects that we will announce in due time.

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 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. There 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.