Call to Withdraw from “Counter-Terrorism” Summit in Israel Amid Genocide in Gaza

Joint Statements · Palestine · 25 August 2025

We strongly urge all participants to withdraw from the upcoming World Summit on Counter-Terrorism organised by the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), a research institute of Israel’s Reichman University.

The event, scheduled for September 15-18, 2025, and branded as the “most influential event in the field of counter-terrorism today”, is taking place amid Israel’s ongoing genocide in Gaza, perpetrated in the name of combating terrorism.

Participation in the World Summit is particularly unconscionable at a time when, just 80 kilometres away, over two million Palestinians are subjected to constant bombardment and mass starvation.

The ICT is highly problematic for two main reasons: it is closely intertwined with the Israeli military, security and intelligence apparatus, and it perpetuates the dehumanising narrative used by the Israeli authorities to justify the ongoing genocide.

A significant portion of the ICT’s members have held high-ranking positions in the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), the Israeli Security Agency (ISA), or in the Mossad, Israel’s intelligence services.

Among the institute’s leadership are ICT Director and IDF Colonel Eitan Azani, and ICT Board of Directors Chairman and former Mossad Director Shabtai Shavit, after whom the World Summit is named. ICT members also include Sharon Saportas, who served as IDF Planning Department Head of Operations during Israel’s 2012 “Operation Pillar of Defense (PDF)” and 2014 “Operation Protective Edge” military attacks on Gaza, and former Police Commander Alik Ron, who retired from the police following a court petition demanding his removal or suspension due to evidence of racism towards Palestinians and abuses of power.

In January 2025, the ICT platformed former Israeli Minister of Defence Yoav Gallant, despite the fact that he is wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Furthermore, under the guise of research and academia, the ICT, which positions itself as “one of the leading academic institutes for counter-terrorism in the world”, plays a role in portraying the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza as a legitimate “war on terror”. Reichman University, with which the ICT is affiliated, has mobilised to “join the war effort”, and introduced scholarships and honorary titles for student soldiers serving in the Israeli military since October 2023.

Through its academic programs, research desks, publications and media appearances, the ICT

clearly reinforces the Israeli authorities' rhetoric to justify committing grave human rights violations against Palestinians. Recent research authored by ICT founder and Reichman University President Boaz Ganor, describes Israel's military assault on Gaza as a "war of self-defense" which was "forced upon Israel", and conflates global protests against Israeli policies, academic boycotts of Israeli universities, and slogans such as "Free Palestine" and "from the river to the sea" with antisemitism.

In past years, ICT World Summits have drawn numerous academics and representatives of United Nations (UN) agencies. Among past participants are Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) Vladimir Voronkov (PDF), Director of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) Mauro Miedico (PDF), former UNCCT Director and current Secretary General of the Council of Presidents of the United Nations General Assembly (UNCPGA) Jehangir Khan, former UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland, and UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) Executive Director Natalia Gherman.

Some of the UN officials' relationship with the ICT extends well beyond participation in the World Summit: the ICT's Advisory Board includes current CTED Director and Chief of Branch David Scharia, former CTED Executive Director (2013-2017) Jean Paul Laborde, and former UN Assistant Secretary-General and CTED Executive Director (2007-2013) Mike Smith.

For decades, Israeli universities have been complicit in Israel's regime of military occupation, settler-colonialism, apartheid, and now genocide. In recent months, dozens of universities have ended or pledged to end ties with complicit Israeli universities. Pisa and Tilburg universities, along with Sciences Po Strasbourg, have already cut ties with Reichman University.

As Reichman University, the ICT and its World Summits propagate and advance Israel's "counter-terrorism" narrative to justify the brutal onslaught against 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza, we urge:

- All speakers, attendees, and sponsors to immediately withdraw from the 2025 World Summit and end all collaboration with the ICT;
- All UN agencies and their representatives to immediately cut ties with the ICT.

Update: The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) have confirmed to MENA Rights Group that they will not be attending the upcoming World Summit, despite past participation of several of their representatives.

List of Signatories :

Palestinian organisations:

- Al-Dameer Association for Human Rights – Gaza
- Al-Haq

- Al Mezan Center for Human Rights
- Defence for Children International – Palestine (DCIP)
- Law for Palestine
- Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR)
- The Independent Commission for Human Rights (National Human Rights Institution in Palestine)
- Visualizing Palestine

International organisations:

- Access Center For Human Rights (ACHR)
- ALQST for Human Rights
- Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression for Human Rights (AFTE)
- Association Marocaine des Droits Humains
- CAGE International
- Cairo Institute for Human Rights (CIHRS)
- Center for Democracy and Governance-Somaliland
- Child Rights International Network (CRIN)
- CIVICUS
- DAWN
- EFDI International
- Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)
- European Saudi Organization for Human Rights
- FairSquare
- HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement
- Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID)
- Innovation for Change-MENA Hub
- Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion
- Intelwatch
- International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
- Kawaakibi Foundation
- Kenya Human Rights Commission (National Human Rights Institution in Kenya)
- MENA Rights Group

- National Union of Peoples' Lawyers
- Red Universitaria por Palestina (RUxP)
- Salam for Democracy and Human Rights (SALAM DHR)
- Security Intersections and Alternatives (Southeast Asia)
- SHOAA for Human Rights
- Sinai Foundation for Human Rights (SFHR)
- Statewatch
- The Regional Coalition for Women Human Rights Defenders in South West Asia and North Africa (WHRDMENA)
- US Campaign for Palestinian Rights
- Vuka Coalition for Civic Action

Individuals:

- Hina Gul Roy
- Dr Ilia Siatitsa
- Lina Alhathloul
- Mahmoud Hamada, Palestinian NGOs Network
- Marco A. Velásquez-Ruiz
- Martin Flaherty, Princeton University
- Raouf Farrah
- Sally Mboumien
- Yahya Assiri

Published at https://humena.org/call-to-withdraw-counter-terrorism-summit-israel/
HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement · info@humena.org