



**UNIVERSITÀ
DI SIENA
1240
IL RETTORE**

Dear Professors

Ayman Sobh (President of Al-Aqsa University),
Omar Milad (President of Al-Azhar University – Gaza), and
Asad Asaad (President of the Islamic University of Gaza),

I am writing in my capacity as Rector of the University of Siena in response to your open letter dated July 14, 2025. I have read and supported your appeal, which reflects the events we have been witnessing and reading about for weeks, months, and now years.

The University of Siena has officially expressed its repudiation of war and the disproportionate reaction to the events of October 7, 2023, perpetrated by the terrorist organization Hamas. We did so through a motion unanimously approved by the Academic Senate on April 8, 2024, emphasizing our firm "condemnation of the indiscriminate massacre of the Palestinian people carried out by the Israeli army" following the terrorist attack of October 7, 2023.

We reiterated this stance with a second motion on July 16, 2024, also unanimously approved by the Academic Senate, drawing attention to the ferocity and inhumanity with which the Israeli army unacceptably targets the civilian population and the places where they seek refuge. On that occasion, we expressed our strong hope for a two-state solution and called on the Italian government to recognize the State of Palestine.

Meanwhile, the University of Siena, as part of the "Conference of Italian University Rectors" (CRUI), has joined similar positions in favor of a ceasefire, the release of hostages, and an end to the massacre of the Palestinian people.

The reaction of the Israeli government, its President, and the Israeli army has long since exceeded the bounds of military action against Hamas, taking on the increasingly evident characteristics of a massacre of the civilian population, indiscriminate killings, and the genocide of the Palestinian people.

In Siena, we used the term genocide during a meeting organized on June 12, 2024, by the Rectors of the two city universities (University for Foreigners of Siena and University of Siena) together with journalist Rula Jebreal. At that time, the use of that term sparked reactions and brought to light a series of distinctions that, now more than a year later, leave no doubt about the extent of what the Israeli government, its President, and the Israeli army are systematically perpetrating in an evident attempt to eliminate Hamas through the elimination of the Palestinian people.

One can debate the historical meaning of the term genocide; however, in substance and in the current perspective, what is happening in the Gaza Strip corresponds to an attempt to eliminate the Palestinian people.



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As an individual, even as Rector of the University of Siena, I strongly renew the call for the cessation of this senseless and inhumane carnage. I hope that efforts to achieve a lasting and definitive ceasefire will reach this outcome as soon as possible.

The University of Siena has been waiting for months to welcome some of its students to Siena after having decided to establish more than 15 scholarships for them as part of the "Just Peace" program and the specific delegation for "Refugees from crisis areas," in collaboration with important institutions in the city of Siena (Fondazione Monte dei Paschi di Siena). For months, we have been in contact with our students, waiting for them to obtain visas to Italy and then be authorized to leave Gaza.

A similar and broader effort has been defined by the CRUI with the establishment and coordination of about one hundred scholarships for students from Palestine (IUPALS project).

The University of Siena considers maintaining institutional relationships with all universities worldwide as part of its mission, precisely to create bridges and channels of collaboration and solidarity with other university communities that are suffering and in need of support, but also with communities that can be the voice of dissent against the senselessness of war and the massacre of defenseless people (just last July 15, we renewed a Memorandum of Understanding with Hebron University).

I am confident that the University of Siena and the system of Italian universities adhering to the CRUI will provide their support for the reconstruction of the universities of Gaza once this senseless massacre has been halted with the achievement of a definitive cessation of violence, the release of hostages, the constant arrival of food and aid for the Palestinian civilian population, and the restoration of living conditions and coexistence worthy of human beings.

Prof. Roberto Di Pietra
Rector
University of Siena