Response to the Hebrew University narrative

I am responding to the story the Hebrew University published about me on 29 September 2026. I publish this here to make sure people know how the University handles dispute, documents, treats witnesses and responds to those who challenge its conduct.

J is no longer able to participate in this discussion. I will disclose no more of her private material than is necessary to demonstrate the irresponsible conduct of the University, and the unreliability of its story.

Further documentation can be made available on request to journalists, researchers, or investigators examining the record, with appropriate protection for private and third-party information.

Context of the relationship *Since the University made claims about the relationship, I feel it is necessary to provide context and correct their account. Since J is deceased, I will try to keep it minimal.*

J started her PhD with me in 2018. From 2018, she spoke about how close she felt to me intellectually. In June 2019, J told me she found it reassuring how alike she felt we were, right down to our "system of axioms," and I acknowledged her comment before turning the conversation back to mathematics (Main Annex, item 11). From 2020, I felt my attempts to discuss mathematics often went unanswered for months unless I first engaged on non-mathematical topics. I was worried about her wellbeing and tried to keep a scientific project involving her moving; ordinarily she would have to finish her PhD in 2021. She sought more personal involvement from me, and said this helped her and that she needed it to work, although I was unsure how to respond. I encouraged her to seek outside help or involve another advisor. I also tried to involve colleagues and University psychological services, but did not obtain assistance.

During Summer 2021, I visited IHES, and arranged an office at Sorbonne for J. I was confused when she complained that I worked too long[1]. I tried to set limits and thought I had made clear that I was overwhelmed[2]. I felt I could not provide enough support for her to work. I understood why J sought reassurance, but I asked her to turn to others first for non-academic support so that our contact could centre on her mathematical work (see also Main Annex, item 6, 13). In response, J complained to me about anxiety, and a lack of help from Hebrew University (2021, Main Annex 14) and that she therefore needed my support, stating my proximity calmed her.

During 2022, I concluded that the arrangement was not sustainable. I understood the emotional reassurance she sought, but realised it was beyond my capabilities. Over time, I concluded that I could not continue providing that degree of personal support. I encouraged J to seek support elsewhere and tried to limit our contact to academic matters, while I felt I had to force distance.

In autumn 2023, J made allegations against me. Initially, I blamed myself for withdrawing personal support. With distance however, I came to understand that the degree of emotional care she sought exceeded what I could provide within an academic supervisory relationship.

That J died is deeply tragic. I genuinely enjoyed the times we got to talk mathematics, and I wish I could have seen where she would take her ideas. I had hoped to see her flourish as a scientist and as a person. The University's account removes much of J's agency. She spoke plainly about why she wanted me to remain her adviser, and she was equally direct when she needed emotional reassurance from me. It was entirely understandable that she asked for it.

University conduct

The University knowingly makes baseless and provably false claims. It relies on documents it knows to be substantively altered, and left witnesses feeling intimidated by their conduct. The University's published story knowingly contradicts even J's testimony, creating more closeness than documents or any testimony, including

[1]I had invited her along so that she could work with colleagues in her field in Paris. J later stated to the University that she thought the trip was a vacation. At the time, I did not understand why she did not use the arranged office and did not talk to colleagues after the lecture I arranged for her to give. I mention this only to clarify why I was confused about her behaviour; I now realise that I may have miscommunicated what I expected the trip to be.

[2]The University retells setting boundaries (see Section 15(g) and 88) as the proposal of a romantic relationship.

hers, supported. University officials stated they felt they didn't "need to read" the original documents (29.12.2024) and relied on altered documents instead. The University has not explained how it crafted its published story, and why it sits uneasy with the record.

Altered and non-authentic documentary evidence. The University repeatedly presented documents as "originals" in which I identified alterations. For example, in one exchange with University representatives, H. Berenson displayed words of love as if I had written them to J. Faced with original evidence, N. Litman then realised that the words were J's caption beside her picture, and that what was being presented had been substantively altered that the words were J's. The issue was who had written the words, rather than how to translate them:

H. Berenson: Wait, no. The whole question. You are writing to J (in early 2021): "I love you now and forever." I love you now forever and ever. [...]
N. Litman: The caption [in the original] is the part next to her picture, which she wrote, the part where it says: [...] "I love you now forever and ever". This is something she wrote, and what he answers, this is the bottom part of the correspondence.[3]

Despite that exchange, the University later submitted a version it described as "corrected". It turned out that despite the University having displayed awareness of, among other things, this specific issue, the very same alteration changing speakers was repeated.

These problems go beyond translation, and they raise serious questions about intent and conduct of the University. It is not an isolated incident.

The first-instance account for instance attributed to me purported quotations absent from the source record, some expressly labelled "original". Despite repeated requests, the University did not identify their source. My appeal specifically challenged several such purported quotations, and proved they were not in the original record. In a 12.05.2026 submission, it explicitly acknowledged awareness of several issues, including those I pointed out. Instead of correcting, it then reversed course for the final narrative, claiming in their final story that their issues had been corrected without a change to their files. Moreover, their published story (for instance §39 of their account) repeats adverse findings based on purported quotations the University refused to explain the source of, and knew were not in the original source[4].

Self-certification of fairness and conduct. The University characterised my repeated objections as obstruction, saying I had the originals and everything had been translated. Yet those originals revealed alterations that persisted in replacement submissions[5]. Their logic becomes circular. *I had the originals, and pointed out issues. Therefore, the University did not feel the need to correct.*

Most submissions remained untranslated and their origins unclear; even basic access required a labour court's intervention. Assurances of fairness do not explain why the record remained uncorrected.

Treatment of witnesses. The University repeatedly used what I felt was inappropriate pressure as part of the dispute. For instance, in 2023 it threatened to spread harmful claims if I continued communicating with colleagues about our scientific projects. This behaviour and similar conduct caused significant harm and difficulty in convincing witnesses to come forward.

Despite requests not to pressure witnesses, during the dispute, two researchers who gave evidence contradicting the University's narrative subsequently complained that its treatment of them was intimidating and retaliatory. In summer 2026, they also raised concerns about alteration and dissemination of their statements[6].

Talia Sasson (responsible for compiling the story for the university) dismissed the witnesses' confidentiality complaints as "frivolous". Despite this, the University under her direction circulated its response, identifying

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[3]These also turned out to be altered in the versions the University submitted.
[4]Similar issues arise with the other times the story refers back to purported quotations, such as §15(l), §15(q), §88 etc. .
[5]I do not know who made the alterations or why. The record establishes knowing reliance on alterations and purported originals the source of which the university would not explain.
[6]Main Annex, items 9 and 10. The witnesses had asked me to keep them updated after the University refused to answer their letter raising these concerns. Repeated requests for transparency by them remained unanswered, see Annex P.

the witnesses and discussing their complaints, to third parties who Sasson had just denied having been given access[7].

The witnesses have described their own experiences. I thank them for authorising me to share their statements[8].

Treatment of external observer and omissions from the University record. An external observer was requested to attend a videoconference because of concerns about the treatment of witnesses. The University initially admitted the observer. After the observer raised an issue about how the session was being conducted, Talia Sasson said their attendance had not been authorised and accused me of letting the observer in.

The facts contradict her: The University (and in particular Talia) alone controlled access to the meeting. Further, the transcript shared by the University omits the earlier part in which they admitted the observer, cutting it from their record. Anticipating issues, I made a recording myself, which preserves the full sequence[9].

The University impeded and prolonged the dispute through its misconduct, creating and leaving unresolved problems concerning witnesses, documents and access; it then characterised my requests for correction as obstruction.

Examples from the University's story

These issues enter the University's story. I focus on some clear examples of the University distorting the facts and testimony.

Statements about language. The University repeatedly distorts statements. For instance, in Sections 15(k) and 88 it presents me as admitting that I pretended to have romantic or sexual feelings. *What was said: I explained that providing extensive personal support was, at times, exhausting, but that I concealed exhaustion to not ruin the effect of support. This does not say I was pretending to have, or having, romantic or sexual feelings. According to J herself, there was no use of romantic language attributable to me in the text (14.11.2024); no phrasing or expression she did not use herself platonically as well. This contrasts the later construction of such by the University based on altered text samples.* Another example: The University in Section 15(k) presents my position as treating "sleeping while cuddling" as an act between friends. *My testimony discussed a particular circumstance of J asking me to help her calm down and help prepare a talk. It mixes and conflates how I was distinguishing sleeping arrangements with friends from the extent of emotional and physical support she sought.*

Accommodation. The University in Section 89 describes J as effectively having "no choice" but to share a bed with me during a work trip to IHES. *But in her statements to the University on 14 November 2024, she described having a separate bed. I suggested that she book a hotel at my grant's expense and said I was unsure whether the IHES apartment would be suitable. She nevertheless asked to stay with me.*

The University in Section 15(f) makes the assertion that the apartment during a second work trip to Paris contained "only one bed" and that J was therefore forced to share a bed with me. *The booking record and her own words (7 January 2025) show that she was involved in choosing the accommodation and that she had a separate bed and room. Contemporary messages show that I asked that the default should be independent accommodation that I would fund (Main Annex Items 1.2, 6, 13). On occasions where J showed up without having organized her own accomodation, I arranged for her and, where necessary, paid out of pocket for them.*

Requests to include witness statements. The University in Sections 71 and 77 states that no application or explanation was provided for admitting the witness statements. *The record shows I expressly requested their admission and proposed limited questioning of the witnesses if necessary. It also explained, among other things, how threats and pressure affecting collaborators and witnesses affected the dispute and the availability of witnesses.*

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[7]This raises several questions. If the University gave access to outside parties, and then misrepresented the same, did outside parties have further influence?

[8]For transparency: One of the witnesses, Vasiliki Petrotou, was my postdoc at the time. At the beginning of the dispute, Raz Kupferman offered her a postdoctoral position at Hebrew University. She declined and continued her postdoc with me in Paris. He later suggested her to rethink her position concerning this story.

[9]Annex G shows four stills showing the sequence; Annex G2 reproduces the relevant parts of the University transcript.

In any case, suppressing the witness statements does not make the question they raise disappear, especially where the University then relies on documents it knows to be altered.

Institutional accountability

I am making primary material available so readers can examine those discrepancies for themselves. Out of concern for J's family, the public Main Annex is redacted to cut out any original messages involving J; originals can be made available in response to legitimate requests and under appropriate privacy safeguards.

The underlying issues do not depend on anyone's character. They can be tested by asking the University a few straightforward questions:

1. When did you learn that documents used to support your story were unreliable? Why were the disputed versions still being used after those problems had been identified?
2. Who checked the published story against the underlying statements, including J's? What explains the discrepancies identified above, and what steps will you take to correct them?
3. How were the witnesses' complaints investigated? Why were their confidentiality concerns dismissed as "frivolous", and why was the response sent to the third parties whose involvement they had questioned and the University denied?

I understand and sympathise that she felt it was necessary to complain[10]. I also have sympathy for the emotional reassurance she sought.

The issues I raise are with the University.

[10]When asked during a 07.01.2025 hearing why she filed the complaint, J said: "Because my doctoral thesis has been in the arxiv since 2022. It was supposed to have already been re-edited and was supposed to be sent for publication. Because of all these events, it didn't happen, and because of all this, my doctoral thesis is taking years longer than it was supposed to, to the point that people ask me - why? They demand an explanation from me, if I want to work with them in the future."