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Higher Education



Students at Ben Gurion University (archives) Photo: Eliad Levy

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Recommendation: Shut down 'leftist' department

Council for Higher Education committee says Ben Gurion University's Politics Department politically biased. Professor: Some committee members extreme rightists

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In an unprecedented move, an international committee appointed by the Council for Higher Education has recommended that the Politics and Government Department at Ben Gurion University be shut down unless it addresses some of the problems pointed out by the committee.

According to the Yedioth Ahronoth daily, several of the department's researchers are considered to be radical leftists. Some of them have even called for an economic, political and cultural [boycott](#) on [Israel](#) due to its "apartheid regime."

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The committee, which is headed by Professor Thomas Risse from the Free University in Berlin, expressed its concern that the department's political inclinations may be resulting in what it referred to as an imbalance between the opinions of the faculty members and the curriculum.

"The political science professors must note that the opinions they are expressing are personal...so that the students will be exposed to alternative viewpoints," the reported stated.

The committee said it was also concerned that the "strong emphasis on political activism may undermine the research of politics as a scientific field." The report noted that there is a consensus among the students that the courses offered to them are politically biased.

It should be noted that Committee member [Galia Golan](#), a professor at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya, said the demand for a more "balanced" study program is in direct contrast with the principle of academic freedom, which she called a pillar of higher education.

The committee mentioned additional administrative problems within the department, and recommended that Ben Gurion University consider shutting it down unless necessary changes are implemented.

Professor Dani Filc, who heads the department, said "most of the report's claims are based on empirical mistakes," adding that the report was part of a "campaign aimed at hurting the most popular department in Israel."

Filc said the department would accept the committee's recommendation to hire more faculty members.

Another senior professor at the department attacked the report, saying "the committee is external, and some of its members have extreme right-wing political opinions. It published a false report which is part of a campaign launched by extremist entities to hurt the department."

In response to the report, Ben Gurion University President Rivka Carmi said the department is "well-known throughout the world and claimed it had been "put under a magnifying glass." She called the report "much ado about nothing."

Addressing the report's claims, Carmi said some students believe the department is

politically biased, while others say it taught them to think for themselves.

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