

The Location of Hebrew University Campus in Mt. Scopus

The legal status of the historic Mount Scopus campus of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem is undisputed. It was purchased in the 1910's from its owner, John Edward Gray Hill, for the establishment of the University. The University was officially established in 1918, and construction works began soon after. The university held all its academic activities on the Mount Scopus campus from its opening in 1925 until 1948. During the 1948 war, Palestinians launched a terror attack, killing 76 faculty, students, and medical staff. As a result, the university was forced to temporarily relocate its activities to other places in Jerusalem. However, the campus remained under Israeli control, according to the ceasefire agreement with Jordan. The university could not hold academic activities in the campus until 1967, but the entire area of the academic campus, which has been continuously owned by the University since the 1910's, has been part of the State of Israel since the State was founded in 1948. The area remained an enclave, formally and practically part of the State of Israel, between 1948–1967.

After the Six-Day War, in 1967, access to the campus became safe again and the university re-established its academic activities there. The legal and political status of the land did not change. Furthermore, the international community has always recognized the Mt. Scopus campus as part of Israel and not as part of the territories occupied by Israel in 1967. International dignitaries and diplomats, including the EU ambassador, and members of international organizations, regularly visit the campus, participate in its activities and co-sponsor events held in it. The European Research Council, which does not allow its grants to fund activities in the Occupied Territories, also regularly funds research activities undertaken in the Mount Scopus campus.

In addition to the area of the campus in which the university holds its academic activities, the Hebrew University also owns two additional lots near the main campus, where it operates a dormitory (“the Students’ Village”) and a sports center. These lots were owned by the University from before the founding of Israel. The lot of the sports’ center was donated to the University by the Lamport family in 1938 and the Students’ Village lot was donated by the Rosenblum family in three installments between 1943 and 1947. The lots have been continuously owned by the University since then. Unlike the main campus, these two lots are outside the area of the University’s 1948-1967 enclave. However, there is nothing unlawful or unethical about the situation. The University has owned these lots since before 1948 and thus maintains continuous private property rights there, regardless of the area’s sovereignty status, which is indeed contested. Furthermore, during the time in which the Jordanians occupied the area, and denied the University access to these lots, they were left completely deserted. In 1967, when the University regained access to these lots, it found them free of any use.

The use of the University of these two lots for its student dormitory and sports center does not violate any International Law rule or norm. International law does not prohibit the use of private land for public purposes, and the University is not at fault for using its longstanding property rights in ways that are lawful and non-discriminatory. The dormitories and sports center serve all Hebrew University students, Jews and Palestinians alike. The University’s use of the area is based on its private property rights, not on the powers of the Israeli government, and is legal pursuant to all applicable legal systems, both national and international.