

Letter from Scholars Supporting Professor Derek J. Penslar
24 January 2024

We—scholars of Jewish history, Israeli society, antisemitism, the Holocaust and related fields based at universities in Israel, North America and Europe—voice our full support for the recent decision by the interim President of Harvard University, Prof. Alan Garber, to appoint Prof. Derek J. Penslar, the William Lee Frost Professor of Jewish History in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, as co-chair of Harvard University's new Presidential Task Force on Combating Antisemitism.

A pathbreaking scholar who has written extensively about the social and political histories of modern Jewish society and the State of Israel as well as questions related to antisemitism, Prof. Penslar is perfectly suited to help lead Harvard's new Task Force on Combating Antisemitism at this critical moment in Jewish history.

Over the past few decades, Prof. Penslar has proven to be an enthusiastic supporter and invaluable interlocutor for generations of scholars based in Israel and other countries. In both his role as the former co-editor of the *Journal of Israeli History* as well as his positions as a professor of Jewish and Israeli history at Indiana University, the University of Toronto, Oxford University and Harvard University, Prof. Penslar has repeatedly gone out of his way to assist scholars from Israel and around the world, either by reading and reviewing their work, promoting exchange between scholars based in different countries, or by acting as a trusted academic mentor.

During this period, Prof. Penslar has repeatedly served as a visiting scholar at various universities in Israel where he has presented, taught and engaged with hundreds of students, faculty and community members in both English and in Hebrew. Indeed, it is hard to think of many North American academics who have contributed more to the development of the study of Jewish history and of Israeli society over the past few decades than Derek Penslar. In 2022, Prof. Penslar was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Association for Israel Studies for precisely these reasons.

The murderous attack by Hamas against Israel and its citizens on October 7th 2023 and the ensuing deadly war are yielding still incalculable effects on Israelis and Palestinians. In this difficult period of social, political and existential uncertainty and pervasive anxiety regarding what it means to be Jewish in the twenty-first century, there are few people better prepared to address these and related challenges with a unique combination of historical understanding and interpersonal empathy than Prof. Derek Penslar of Harvard University.

For these and other reasons, we grant our fullest support to Prof. Derek Penslar as co-chair of the new Task Force on Combating Antisemitism at Harvard University. As part of this support, we are happy to contribute our academic experience and expertise to its inquiry and recommendations.

1. Uriel Abulof, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Tel Aviv University; Department of Government, Cornell University
2. Gur Alroey, Professor of Israel Studies, Rector, University of Haifa
3. Ofer Ashkenazi, Associate Professor of History, Director, Koebner-Minerva Center for German History, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
4. David Assaf, Professor, Department of Jewish History, Tel Aviv University
5. Dr. Cornelia Aust, Salomon Ludwig Steinheim Institute for German-Jewish History, Essen
6. Leora Auslander, Arthur and Joann Rasmussen Professor of Western Civilization, Departments of Race, Diaspora & Indigeneity and History, University of Chicago
7. Carol Bakhos, Professor of Religion, and Jewish Studies, UCLA
8. Oren Barak, Maurice B. Hexter Chair in International Relations – Middle East Studies & Professor of Political Science, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
9. Avriel Bar-Levay, Professor, Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies, The Open University of Israel
10. Prof. Israel Bartal, Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem, Israel
11. Orit Bashkin, Professor, University of Chicago
12. Dr. Ela Bauer, Kibbutzim College Tel Aviv
13. Albert I. Baumgarten, Professor Emeritus, Department of Jewish History, Bar Ilan University
14. Johannes Becke, Professor for Israel and Middle East Studies, Heidelberg University for Jewish Studies
15. Asher D. Biemann, Edgar M. Bronfman Professor of Modern Judaic Studies, University of Virginia
16. Elissa Bemporad, Professor of History, Queens College and The Graduate Center, CUNY
17. Jonathan Ben-Dov, Professor of Bible, Tel Aviv University
18. Dr. Karma Ben Johanan, Department of Comparative Religion, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
19. Lihi Ben Shitrit, Marilyn and Henry Taub Associate Professor of Israel Studies, NYU
20. Doris L. Bergen, Chancellor Rose and Ray Wolfe Professor of Holocaust Studies, University of Toronto
21. Michael Barnett, University Professor, George Washington University.
22. Beth Berkowitz, Professor of Religion and Chair of Jewish Studies, Barnard College
23. Michael Berkowitz, Professor of Modern Jewish History, Department of Hebrew & Jewish Studies, University College London
24. Dr Leora Bilsky, Full Professor at the Tel Aviv University Faculty of Law, and the Director of the Minerva Center for Human Rights at Tel Aviv University
25. David Blackbourn, Cornelius Vanderbilt Distinguished Chair and Professor of History Emeritus, Vanderbilt University
26. Jonathan Boyarin, Diann G. and Thomas A. Mann Professor of Modern Jewish Studies, Departments of Anthropology and Near Eastern Studies, Cornell University

27. Benjamin Braude, Associate Professor of History, Boston College; Research Associate, Department of Religion, Smith College
28. Michael Brenner, Distinguished Professor of History and Seymour and Lillian Abensohn Chair in Israel Studies, American University, Washington DC; Professor of Jewish History and Culture, Ludwig Maximilian University Munich
29. Robert Brym, SD Clark Professor of Sociology Emeritus and Lab for the Global Study of Antisemitism, Centre for Jewish Studies, University of Toronto
30. J. H. (Yossi) Chajes, Wolfson Professor of Jewish Thought, Department of Jewish History, University of Haifa
31. Meir Chazan, Associate Professor, Department of Jewish History, Head of the Chaim Weizmann Institute for the Study of Zionism and Israel, Tel Aviv University
32. Professor Bryan Cheyette FEA, University of Reading, U.K.
33. Professor Hillel Cohen, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
34. Richard I. Cohen, Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
35. Yinon Cohen, Yerushalmi Prof. of Israel & Jewish Studies, Department of Sociology, Columbia University
36. Prof. Kobi Cohen-Hattab, Chair, The Martin (Szusz) Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology, Faculty of Jewish Studies, Bar Ilan University
37. Manuela Consonni, Professor, Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry, The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
38. Giovanna D'Amico, Department of Ancient and Modern Civilisations, Università degli Studi di Messina
39. Jeremy Dauber, Atran Professor of Yiddish Literature, Language, and Culture; Director Emeritus, Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies, Columbia University
40. Dr. Assaf David, Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and the Forum for Regional Thinking
41. Avital Davidovitch-Eshed, Senior Lecturer, Jewish Philosophy and Talmud Department & Women and Gender Studies Program, Tel Aviv University
42. Jonathan Decter, Edmond J. Safra Professor of Sephardic Studies, Brandeis University
43. Nathaniel Deutsch, Murray Baumgarten Endowed Chair in Jewish Studies, Distinguished Professor of History, and Director of the Center for Jewish Studies, The University of California, Santa Cruz
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45. Lois Dubin, Professor Emerita of Religion, Smith College
46. Arie M. Dubnov, Associate Professor of History & Max Ticktin Chair of Israel Studies, The George Washington University
47. Glenn Dynner, Carl and Dorothy Bennett Professor of Judaic Studies, Director of the Bennett Center, Fairfield University
48. John Efron, Koret Chair in Jewish History, Department of History, University of California-Berkeley

49. Lily Eilan, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies, Heidelberg University
50. Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, Professor Emerita, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
51. Shmuel Feiner, Chair, The Historical Society of Israel, Professor Emeritus, Department of Jewish History, Bar Ilan University
52. Marjorie Feld, Professor of History, Babson College
53. David Feldman, Director, Birkbeck Institute for the Study of Antisemitism, Professor of History, Birkbeck, University of London
54. Stefanie Fischer, Center for Research on Antisemitism (ZfA), Berlin
55. David Fishman, Jewish Theological Seminary
56. Talya Fishman, Associate Professor of Medieval & Early Modern Jewish Intellectual and Cultural History, Department of Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations, University of Pennsylvania
57. Anna Foa, Professor Emerita of modern History, Università Sapienza, Roma
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60. Shai Ginsburg, Associate Professor, Chair, Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
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62. Prof. Amos Goldberg, The Jonah M. Machover Chair in Holocaust Studies, Head of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
63. Sylvie Anne Goldberg, Professor emerita, Ehess, (Advanced School for Social Studies), Paris
64. Semion Goldin, Researcher, The Leonid Nevzlin Research Center for Russian and East European Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
65. Amir Goldstein, Associate Professor of Israeli History, Tel-Hai College
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70. Jonathan Gribetz, Associate Professor, Near Eastern Studies Department and Program in Judaic Studies, Princeton University
71. Sarit Kattan Gribetz, Associate Professor of Theology and Co-Director of the Center for Jewish Studies, Fordham University
72. Rebekka Grossmann, Assistant Professor of History, Leiden University
73. Dr. David Guedj, Senior Lecturer, Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry, Head, Misgav Yerushalayim Research Center, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
74. François Guesnet, Professor of Modern Jewish History, University College London
75. Professor Yael Guilat, Art History and Visual Culture, Oranim College of Education
76. Danny Gutwein, Professor Emeritus, Department of Jewish History, University of Haifa
77. Liora R. Halperin, Professor of International Studies and History & Distinguished Endowed Chair in Jewish Studies at the University of Washington

78. Hanan Harif, Lecturer, Tel-Hai Academic College
79. Dr. Shelley Harten, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art
80. Professor Benjamin Hary, NYU and Director of NYU Tel Aviv
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88. Abigail Jacobson, Professor, Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, The
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181. Joshua M. Shanes, Professor of Jewish Studies, College of Charleston
182. Anita Shapira, Professor Emerita of Jewish History and Israel Studies, Tel Aviv University, member of the Israel Academy for Sciences and Humanities
183. Gilad Sharvit, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Towson University
184. Yaacov Shavit, Professor Emeritus, Department of Jewish History, Tel Aviv University
185. Dr. Ghilad H. Shenhav, Center for Israel Studies, LMU Munich
186. Eugene R. Sheppard, Associate Professor of Modern Jewish History and Thought, Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, Brandeis University
187. Dr. Avi Shilon, Tel Hai Academic College
188. Colin Shindler, Emeritus Professor, University of London, First UK Professor of Israel Studies
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191. Michael K. Silber, Professor Emeritus, Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
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194. Dr. Mia Spiro, Senior Lecturer in Modern Jewish Culture, University of Glasgow
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196. Deborah Starr, Professor of Near Eastern Studies and Jewish Studies, Cornell University
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202. Tali Tadmor Shimony, Senior Lecturer, Ben Gurion University of the Negev
203. David Tal, FRHistS, Yossi Harel Chair in Israel Studies, Department of History, University of Sussex

204. Adam Teller, Professor, Department of History and Judaic Studies, Brown University
205. Magda Teter, Professor of History, The Shvidler Chair in Judaic Studies, Fordham University
206. Scott Ury, Associate Professor, Department of Jewish History, Former Director, Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Antisemitism and Racism, Tel Aviv University
207. Dr. Alex Valdman, Researcher, The Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center, Tel-Aviv University
208. Roman Vater, Hughes Hall, University of Cambridge
209. Jeffrey Veidlinger, Joseph Brodsky Collegiate Professor of History and Judaic Studies, University of Michigan
210. Stefan Vogt, Professor of Jewish History, Goethe-University Frankfurt am Main, Germany
211. Yair Wallach, Reader (Associate Professor) in Israeli Studies, SOAS, University of London
212. Steven Wagner, Senior Lecturer in International Security, Brunel University London
213. Beth S. Wenger, Moritz and Josephine Berg Professor of History, University of Pennsylvania
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215. Steven Weitzman, Professor, University of Pennsylvania
216. Barry Scott Wimpfheimer, Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Law, Northwestern University
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218. Diane L. Wolf, Professor Emerita of Sociology, UC Davis
219. Sarah Wolf, Assistant Professor of Talmud and Rabbinitics, The Jewish Theological Seminary
220. Azzan Yadin-Israel, Professor of Jewish Studies, Rutgers University
221. Ori Yehudai, Associate Professor, Schottenstein Chair of Israel Studies, Department of History, The Ohio State University
222. Michael Zank, Professor of Religion, Jewish Studies and Medieval Studies, Boston University
223. Yael Zerubavel, Professor Emerita, Jewish Studies and History, Rutgers University
224. Dr. Oded Zinger, Senior Lecturer - Department of Jewish History, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
225. Steven J. Zipperstein, Daniel E. Koshland Professor in Jewish Culture and History, Stanford University
226. Ronald W. Zweig, Taub Professor of Israel Studies (Emeritus), NYU