



Call for Papers:  
**13th EAIS Annual Conference on Israel Studies**

*Navigating Dire Straits: Israeli Polity in the Times of Crises*

*hosted by*

**Moses Mendelssohn Center/University of Potsdam**

**14-16 September 2025**

**Introduction:**

The EAIS 13th Annual Conference on Israel Studies will take place from Sunday, 14 September to Tuesday, 16 September 2025 in Potsdam and will be hosted by the **Moses Mendelssohn Center for European Jewish Studies/University of Potsdam**.

The conference will bring together international scholars from a variety of disciplines, who are engaged in research connected to any aspect of Israel Studies – including, but not limited to, Social Sciences, History, Political Science, International Relations, Jewish Studies, Minority Studies, Literature, Security, Migration Studies, Gender Studies, Palestine Studies, Economics, Law, Religion, Anthropology, Language, Culture, Film, Music and Art.

**Conference Outline:**

The main focus of the conference is on the current polycrisis in Israel. The common thread weaving together different dimensions of this situation is the multi-front war that broke out with the Hamas attack on 7th October 2023. This unprecedented onslaught left Israeli society traumatised, re-focusing on its identity and asking questions about the condition of their state. Together with massive political turmoil surrounding the judicial overhaul and anti-liberal reforms sought by the far-right government of Benjamin Netanyahu, this conflict profoundly shapes Israel's political, social, and economic landscape and will probably continue to do so for years to come. The devastating assault on the Gaza envelope communities was followed by the IDF's invasion of the Gaza Strip, which proved to be one of the most destructive chapters in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The conflict soon escalated, drawing varying levels of military engagement from other Middle Eastern actors. The war has challenged the previously widespread perception of Israel's unparalleled security position in the region.

The rising toll of Palestinian civilian casualties, the overwhelming destruction and the unprecedented displacement and the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip have caused widespread expressions of pro-Palestinian solidarity around the world. While Western countries maintained broad support for Israel's security, criticism of its actions has grown. Anti-Israel protests and campaigns have become more prevalent, even in nations traditionally allied with Israel. At the same time, Europe, the USA, and other Western states have experienced a new rise in antisemitic incidents and are in an ongoing controversy over what is to be considered antisemitism and where legitimate criticism of Israeli politics ends. The world Jewry remained divided in its perception of the State of Israel and the Gaza War has further exacerbated this rift.

The shaken sense of stability and security profoundly impacted Israeli society and the national psyche. On one hand, the perception of shared faith, solidarity, and support for the Israeli troops has strengthened societal unity among Jews. On the other, many blamed the authorities for the failures surrounding October 7. Divisions emerged regarding the conduct of warfare and negotiations for the release of hostages. Against the backdrop of war, already ascendant nationalist tendencies within Israeli society surged, allowing settler violence in the occupied West Bank intensify further. This territory has witnessed a rise in violent attacks by Palestinian and Jewish extremists. Inside Israel, tensions between Jewish and Arab citizens have also been high, but have not translated into the violence seen in 2021. Many Palestinian Israelis reported feeling mistrusted, excluded, and fearful of expressing themselves freely in public. Simultaneously, polls also indicated an increase in a sense of 'shared destiny' between Arabs and Jews in Israel since the outbreak of the war.

The military struggle and debates over how to save the hostages temporarily muted the political rifts that divided Israel prior to October 7, 2023. The judicial overhaul was halted, mass demonstrations subsided, and the polarization centered around Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu shifted to a general criticism of Israel's security failure. Over time, accusations against Netanyahu – citing corruption and threats to democracy, free media, and judicial independence – have resurfaced. The draft of the ultra-Orthodox community has returned as an issue dividing political spectrum. Criticism toward extremist right-wing members of the government coalition also resumed. Their political agendas regarding the war in the Gaza Strip, the expansion of the settlement enterprise in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as their anti-Arab rhetoric, have led many to perceive nationalism and racism as becoming dominant public narratives in Israel or even the official state's policy.

These domestic and international disputes have also resonated in academia. Israel Studies, already susceptible to political polarization, have faced heightened challenges since the war began. Academic boycotts, primarily targeting Israeli institutions, increasingly extended to all scholars perceived as insufficiently critical of Israel. The conflation of political interests with academic research has intensified, threatening the foundations of free and independent scholarship. Mass protests and pro-Palestinian encampments spread over the campuses in many countries. Hostility within the academic community has escalated, occasionally manifesting even in physical attacks.

Against the backdrop of this situation, we hope scholars of Israel Studies will find these different readings of the polycrisis theme as an appropriate starting point for the discussion. At the same time, we would like to focus on more specific themes such as:

- Israel's multi-front war and the implications for Middle Eastern security
- Reconstruction or permanent wound? The future of the communities on the borders with the Gaza Strip and Lebanon
- History and present situation and role of settlements and the settlement movement
- Israeli civil society and Jewish-Palestinian initiatives in the time of crises
- Israeli-Palestinian conflict in global peace studies
- 60 years of the official German-Israeli relations
- Israel's international role: isolation, adaptation, new alliances?
- Israel and world Jewry after 7<sup>th</sup> October: Between alienation and solidarity
- Israel and rising antisemitism worldwide
- Social cohesion in Israel: Setbacks and new pathways
- Israeli demography, in-/out-migration patterns and transnational movements
- Condition of Israeli democracy – nationalism, racism, judicial overhaul, foreign political influences
- Art in Times of War: Protest, Resistance, Propaganda and Hope
- The Ethics of Representation: Photography, Journalism, and the Aesthetics of Suffering
- Academic freedom in Israel Studies: Polarization, politicization, boycotts
- Israel and Muslim-Jewish Relations in the Diaspora

This is an open call for panels and papers. We encourage applications from established scholars as well as PhD students working on all aspects of Israeli history, society, politics, and culture. The broad topic of the conference is intended to reinforce the multidisciplinary nature of Israel Studies.

## **Key Dates:**

### **Deadline for Submission of all proposals: April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

Panel submissions and individual papers should be submitted using the online form.

Notification of acceptance will be sent by April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

Online registration via the EAIS website will open in early May 2025.

## **Instructions for Submission:**

Both panel and paper proposals are to be submitted online:

[PAPER PROPOSALS - SUBMISSION FORM](#)

[PANEL PROPOSALS - SUBMISSION FORM](#)

## **Contact Details**

If you have any queries or questions related to the conference, please contact: [info@israelstudies.eu](mailto:info@israelstudies.eu)

## **Conference Venue**

Research at the Moses Mendelssohn Center in Potsdam, founded in 1992, centers on the history, religion and culture of Jews and Judaism in the countries of Europe from the early modern period to the present day, with a special focus on the history and present of Jews in German-speaking and other European countries, history and present of Israel, contemporary Jewish life in Europe and other parts of the Diaspora, and also on Antisemitism, right-wing extremism and preventive programs to combat it. The institute offers an extensive public library. The dissemination and transfer of knowledge of Jewish history to the broader public by also employing methods of digital humanities are central components of the institute's work.

The MMZ is funded by the Brandenburg Ministry of Science, Research and Culture (MWFK). It is an affiliated institute of the University of Potsdam. MMZ researchers teach – among others - in the fields of politics, history, Jewish studies and literary studies at the University of Potsdam. Collaborations exist, among others, with the Academic Working Group of the Leo Baeck Institute (as part of the international Leo Baeck Institute), the Indiana University in Bloomington with its Jewish Studies Program, the Bucerius Institute at the University of Haifa, the Richard Koebner Minerva Center for German History in Jerusalem, the Center for the Study of the Holocaust and Jewish Literature at Charles University in Prague and the European Association for Israel Studies (EAIS).