<u>Statement regarding the Ethical Code for the Academia</u>

We the undersigned – researchers in philosophy – call upon the Council for Higher Education to reject the recommendations in the document written by Prof. Kasher. As people who work in philosophy and moral and political theory we state that the document suffers from severe conceptual and theoretical flaws which render it unacceptable. Here are the main ones:

1. The document conflates ethical principles voluntarily formulated by a professional community for the sake of its members with disciplinary rules imposed by an external regulatory agency. For this reason, any comparison with the AAUP's Statement on Professional Ethics is mistaken and misleading. The AAUP is a voluntary association, and it is up to specific research associations, colleges and universities to adopt its recommendations if they so choose. The proposed ethical code, on the other hand, is the product of a political initiative by the Minister of Education. According to the proposal, the Council for Higher Education, a government body, will impose the code on institutions of higher education. In these circumstances, it is clear that the document is not a voluntary ethical code, but rather a means of subjecting academic activity to governmental supervision.

2. The document does not consist of general principles enshrined in the academic ethos (as does the AAUP Statement). Instead, it specifies a list of rules and regulations. This is a crucial conflation of an ethical code with disciplinary regulations.

3. The proposed definition of "political activity" in the document conflates what is indeed political activity (advocating for or against specific parties or a candidates) with activities that constitute an exercise of freedom of thought and expression which are the rights of every citizen (expressing one's view on matters of public debate). Exploiting the academic setting in order to promote a specific party or candidate, or for ideological preaching, is uncontroversially unacceptable. In this matter, there is no need for a CHE-sponsored ethical code. The disciplinary mechanisms already in place in the various academic institutions are fully capable of dealing with violations of this principle, as they deal with other disciplinary violations.

4. The definition of "political activity" in the document is not only confused; it is also broad in a way that renders the concept void of any practical significance. Expressing and criticizing matters which are in public dispute is a central feature of research activity and a precondition for meaningful intellectual discourse. Given this broad definition of political activity, its prohibition in academic settings is incompatible with accepted, proper research and teaching practices in many disciplines, such as: economics, geography, history, biology, law, sociology, bible studies, Talmud studies, philosophy, and others.

5. The definition of "academic activity" in the document is also unreasonably broad. The document subsumes together formal research and teaching activity, which faculty members undertake as part of the official definition of their role, with social or civil activity pursued outside the bounds of this role. This is a fundamental fallacy.

The social contribution of academics often includes supervising the writing of textbooks, conducting research to facilitate the work of policy makers, supporting the work of organizations of civil society, and civil and political involvement more generally. The suggested disciplinary regulations will prohibit such activities (including several such activities in which the author of this very document has engaged in the past).

6. It is impossible to separate the document from the wider social and political context in which it was created. The document was written at a time in which publicly funded educational institutions with explicit political affiliation are not subjected to any constraints on their political activity.[*] Over the past few years, the very government that initiated the writing of the document has taken steps clearly, and at times explicitly, designed to limit the freedom of expression and political space of its rivals. These facts, as well as statements made by members of cabinet and coalition parliament members, make it impossible to escape the following conclusion: That this document's aim is not to protect academic freedom and promote scientific research, but rather to create a chilling effect and to bully the academic community.

Due to these profound flaws, we call upon the Council for Higher Education to reject the document; we hereby announce that should it be adopted, we will render it a dead letter.

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[*] Religious institutions of higher education, affiliated with some of the ruling parties and supported by public funds, regularly engage in political activities. No ethical coded has been proposed for them [note added in English version for clarification].

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