

Grußwort beim Empfang des Bundespräsidenten im Schloss Bellevue, 10. 03. 2023

Sehr geehrter Herr Bundespräsident, liebe Frau Büdenbender, lieber Prof. Ron Robin, liebe Prof. Mouna Maroun, liebe Gäste aus Haifa und Deutschland!

Please allow me to continue in English for our guests from Israel.

This is indeed a day of great joy and gratitude for the University of Haifa and her German friends – for our board with my colleagues: Gunther Bonz, Olaf Schulz-Gardyan, Christoph Schumacher, our founding member here today – Rainer Funke – and the chairman emeritus of the university: Manfred Lahnstein. It is a incredible honour for us to be received by you, Mister President – and truly a highlight after 50 years!

I must say that I was excited for weeks – more like a youngster before an exam. But also thrilled as could be.

Dear friends,

When you approach Haifa from Ben Gurion Airport the magnificent Eshkol Tower of our university greets you from the top of Mount Carmel. What a monument to the freedom of spirit and to intellectual honesty! Should you arrive by boat you are welcomed by the famous Bah 'ai Gardens – not only a horticultural showpiece but an impressive sign of the freedom of conscience and religious tolerance.

These are the principles our University has been built upon fifty years ago. And these are the guidelines for our German friends' association, equally celebrating its fiftieth birthday. We are proud that in our university professors, researchers, students and staff alike stand for an open-minded Israel with strong democratic institutions. We are glad that we have been able to foster a mutual understanding and a trustful cooperation of Jewish and Arab students – both Israeli citizens with equal rights. As we always say: the beautiful campus of our university is the biggest meeting place of Jews and Arabs in the whole world – every day!

And we all are looking forward to the opening of the famous and important "Jeckes" museum on our campus. It will remind us of the specific links between German Jews and Palestine, later on Israel.

Dear Mister President,

You know Haifa and our campus. I still see the pictures of your visit some 20 years ago in front of my eyes.

At the time you were Minister of Foreign Affairs and you inaugurated the DAAD Institute at the university as a present for 40 years of diplomatic relations.

And if you allow me to tell a little and very brief anecdote:

Sascha Waltz in Mann Auditorium in Tel Aviv

Please visit us again as soon as possible!

Dear members of the German friends, dear foundation chairmen, dear university presidents, dear supporters of our scholarship programs, dear good people,

We thank you for your gracious support. To put it blandly: We need it more than ever! We hope to have your trust and confidence that your contributions are absolutely on target where most needed and most effective. With so many bridges currently being destroyed physically and symbolically. The friendship bridge with the University of Haifa – the vibrant hub of the vibrant civic society – strong, active and eloquent. This is the bridge of common values between Germany and Israel.

I personally am disturbed very much by what is happening in Israel right now. My husband and I discuss the matter each and every day. Yet – one thing remains crystal-clear in our minds: Solidarity with “our” Israel and with “our” beloved university in particular! And that is why we are so grateful that you receive us today, Mr. President.

Last but not last, I would like to thank the team from your office: Dr. Kersten Whalley and the colleagues from the protocol. Thank you for making it so beautiful for all of us.

Dankeschön und Toda Raba!

10. März 2023

Sonja Lahnstein