

March 25th, 2026

**Dear Presidents and Members of the Academic Councils
of Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Ghent University,
and the University of Antwerp,**

We are writing to express our deep concern regarding your decision to confer a joint honorary doctorate upon Ms. Francesca Albanese, as well as the decision of the University of Antwerp to honor Ms. Noura Erakat.

Honorary doctorates are among the highest distinctions academic institutions can bestow. As such, they carry significant moral and institutional weight, reflecting the values universities choose to promote.

In this context, awarding such distinctions to individuals whose public records include highly controversial and polarizing statements raises serious concerns. Ms. Albanese has repeatedly advanced rhetoric that goes beyond legitimate criticism of Israel and at times borders on forms of anti-Zionism that risk veering into antisemitic tropes, including Holocaust analogies and sweeping, unsubstantiated accusations of genocide. These positions have not gone unnoticed: several European governments - including Germany, France, Austria, Czechia, and Italy - have publicly raised concerns and called for her resignation.

Similarly, Ms. Erakat's public positions following the events of October 7, 2023, raise important questions regarding academic balance, responsibility, and the treatment of violence against civilians.

We are concerned that such recognitions may be perceived as endorsing narratives that contribute to the normalization of extreme rhetoric and risk fueling antisemitism under the guise of political discourse. Universities have a responsibility to foster open, rigorous, and balanced debate - particularly on sensitive issues. This letter does not seek to limit academic freedom, but rather to underscore the importance of ensuring that honorary distinctions are granted with the utmost care.

In light of these considerations, we respectfully urge you to reconsider your decision.

Yours sincerely,



Shannon Seban
Director of European Affairs
Combat Antisemitism Movement