THE CASE AGAINST MICROSOFT @ WDKA*

(& rest of Hogeschool Rotterdam)

*WdKA is used here as a case study. Microsoft is contracted by Hogeschool and services all institutes

MICROSOFT AT WDKA

Many aspects of study and work at WdKA require the use of digital platforms and software, enabled through expensive contracts. With Outlook, Teams, Copilot and the likes, we find ourselves deeply enmeshed with Microsoft, a US company whose complicity with the ongoing genocide in Gaza is undeniable.[1] [2] [3]

In 2024, the International Court of Justice's ruled Israel's acts in Gaza "plausible genocide". This ruling was legally-binding. Its Advisory Opinion of July 2024 declared Israel's occupation illegal, effectively constituting an apartheid regime. Microsoft has not complied with its corporate duty to prevent genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. It should be held accountable for this complicity, just like the executives of IG Farben[4], Flick[5], and Krupp [6] during the Nuremberg Trials.[7]

By providing the technical tools enabling mass surveillance[8] and the calculation of military targets[9], Microsoft is very directly enabling the Palestinian Genocide. Given this situation, the maintenance of contracts binding the Hogeschool Rotterdam with Microsoft allows for Microsoft to remain unaccountable. We believe it is time to question the relationship between the tools we use to perform our work and the corporation enabling the Israeli army to slaughter the people of Palestine.

WHY NOW? AN IMPORTANT PRELIMINARY NOTE

You might have read that Microsoft halted its cloud contracts with the Israeli military. This is not entirely true. Following the publication of an investigation by journalists from +972mag and The Guardian,[10] Microsoft stopped *one* specific contract binding them with Unit 8200, an intelligence and cyberwarfare unit in the Israeli military, but kept other contracts going.[11]

This means that plenty of contracts remain between Microsoft and Israel's military apparatus, allowing Microsoft to keep profiting from its operations in

Israel. The Israeli Ministry of Defense remains Microsoft's second largest military customer after the USA. Microsoft's biggest research and development center outside of the USA is located in Herzliya (Named after Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism). During its inauguration in 2008, the then Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer declared that "Microsoft is as much an Israeli company as an American company".

Following the cancellation of this contract, a migration of the surveillance data from Microsoft Azure to Amazon Web Services cloud platform was planned. The Hogeschool Rotterdam also has contracts binding us to Amazon, also complicit by financially profiting from the ongoing genocide, like Alphabet (Google) and Meta (Instagram, Facebook, Whatsapp).

MICROSOFT PROVIDES THE TOOLS FOR GENOCIDE AUTOMATION

"The AP revealed earlier this year that "select bombing targets during the recent wars in Gaza and Lebanon" have been determined using AI models from Microsoft and OpenAI. "

Microsoft provides the Israeli military with Azure cloud and AI services that are crucial in empowering and accelerating Israel's genocidal war on 2.3 million Palestinians in the illegally occupied Gaza Strip. Microsoft not only provides email and file management systems, but also technology for "combat and intelligence activities". The digital infrastructure and military technologies provided by Microsoft are just as essential to the maintenance of Israel's apartheid state and the execution of its genocide in Gaza as physical walls, weapons and ammunition.

"Leaked data show a dramatic spike in Microsoft cloud storage used by the Israeli military, jumping more than 155 percent between June 2023 and April 2024, and peaking just before the Rafah offensive in May 2024. Storage use is an important indicator showing the extent of AI usage, since storage usually grows along with the usage of other cloud products."[12]

"In total, the costs just for engineering support and consultancy with the

Israeli military have amounted to approximately $10 million since the start of the October 2023 Gaza offensive, with additional support projects worth another $30 million under consideration in 2024. The total size of Israeli MoD's contract with Microsoft, including the usage of the Azure platform, is much larger, but the exact figure could not be ascertained from the documents."[13]

Without Microsoft's commercial cooperation, the Israeli military would lack part of the technical solutions necessary to organise its genocidal activities.

A PARTNERSHIP MADE IN HELL: MICROSOFT AZURE AND OPENAI

"In recent years, documents show, Microsoft has also provided the Israeli military with large-scale access to OpenAI's GPT-4 model – the engine behind ChatGPT – thanks to a partnership with the developer of the AI tools which recently changed its policies against working with military and intelligence clients."[14]

Last summer, investigations revealed that Microsoft Azure servers have been used to compile mass surveillance data. It also showed that all files, which included phone calls, texts, and audio messages, were transcribed and translated. The data could then be cross-checked with Israel's in-house targeting systems and vice versa. An Israeli officer told AP[15] that Azure allows the search for terms and patterns within massive troves of text, and retrieving connections between people and their geographical movements. This data can then be used by the military's own AI systems to flag locations as targets. Since October 2023, the Israeli military has heavily relied on transcription and translation tools and OpenAI models. OpenAI acknowledged that its popular AI-powered translation model Whisper, which can transcribe and translate into multiple languages including Arabic, can make up text that no one said, including adding racial commentary and violent rhetoric.

The complicity of OpenAI is not accidental. Already in January 2024 the company quietly amended its terms of use to remove a ban on "activity that

has high risk of physical harm, including," specifically, "weapons development" and "military and warfare." By doing so, OpenAI greenlighted the use of its technology by the Israeli army, through its collaboration with Microsoft.

MICROSOFT INTERFERES WITH INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE

In May 2025, Microsoft's tech imperialism took another shape: the company suspended the Outlook email account of an International Criminal Court prosecutor in the Netherlands, who was investigating Israel for war crimes. This event has highlighted that, under the US CLOUD Act (Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use of Data Act), in workplaces and institutions across the EU, all activity on US tech platforms can be halted, and data can be analysed and monitored by the US government. In November 2025, the ICC announced it will be moving to an open source suite provided by the Center for Digital Sovereignty (ZenDiS) on behalf of the German Federal Ministry of the Interior.[16]

This interference is not exclusive to Microsoft, according to leaked documents revealed recently. All tech companies are legally obliged to disclose information to police or prosecutors, during investigations. When Amazon and Google signed a 1.2 billion cloud computing contract with the Israeli government in 2021 (project Nimbus), they agreed to sending a secret warning hidden in payments to the Israeli government, signaling whether they had disclosed Israeli data to foreign courts or investigators. The terms agreed upon also prevent Google and Amazon from restricting any use made by the Israeli government and do not allow suspending Israel's access to their technology, even when their terms of service are violated.[17]

MICROSOFT PERFORMS CENSORSHIP AND REPRESSES EMPLOYEES WHO REFUSE TO BE COMPLICIT

No Azure for Apartheid, is an organisation that brings together Microsoft employees who refuse to see their work being used to further oppress the Palestinian population. Microsoft resonded to their actions with a lot of

hostility. Many employees have been laid off as a result of their stand against genocide. In a statement from last May, the organizers revealed Microsoft has been censoring and blocking employee emails containing speech related to Palestine:

'Microsoft attempted to justify this blatant discrimination and censorship by claiming they are simply limiting "political speech" on internal emails. That is demonstrably false. The censorship is extremely specific and targeted. According to our testing, currently the affected terms include "Palestine," "Gaza," "apartheid," "genocide," and "IOF Off Azure." Meanwhile, phrases such as "Israel," "IDF," "abortion," "Ukraine," "Russia," "Clinton," "democrat," "gun control," "wokeness" and other terms that could be deemed "political speech" are being delivered instantly. Blatantly, ***Microsoft also seems to be censoring and delaying emails that mention our member and fired Microsoft worker Vaniya Agrawal's name.****'*[18]

This situation comes as no surprise, given that many AI tools deployed by Microsoft involve text processing and thus a form of surveillance.

No Azure for Apartheid emerged in the US after a critical mass of tech workers who wanted to resist and organise had been reached. Similar initiatives have been formed, such as *No Tech for Apartheid*, which debuted in 2021 in response to Project Nimbus, the Cloud computing project tying together Google, Amazon and the Israeli military.

Several employees such as Vaniya Agrawal or Ibtihal Aboussad were fired for creating public awareness about Microsoft's complicity.



Two Microsoft employees were fired after publicly protesting the company's contracts with the Israeli military.

'In a termination letter to Aboussad, Microsoft accused her of making "hostile, unprovoked, and highly inappropriate accusations" and said she was fired in part because her "conduct was so aggressive and disruptive that [she] had to be escorted out of the room by security," according to the Associated Press.'[19]

THE ROLE OF CAPITALIST TECH IN GENOCIDE IS RECURRENT

The recent report by UN reporter Francesca Albanese, "From economy of occupation to economy of genocide"[20] clarifies the role of corporations in facilitating, sustaining and profiteering from the Israeli settler colonial project in the occupied territories. The report is a call for forcing the private sector into accountability. The report mentions Microsoft, alongside Alphabet (Google), Amazon and others.

Long before Google, Microsoft, or Amazon became computing infrastructure providers for the Israeli military, the US technology multinational IBM saw warfare as an opportunity to profit from both sides. Under its German

subsidiary Dehomag, IBM leased and maintained Hollerith machines for the Nazi regime.[21] Those machines, able to quickly process census data, allowed the execution of a calculated genocide, at industrial scale. By doing so, it paved the way for the current deployment of AI programs such as Lavender, the Gospel or Where's Daddy via the contracts made with US companies offering Cloud infrastructure, Microsoft included.[22]

If we want to uphold values such as sustainability, inclusivity, respect of human rights and dignity, we need to collectively rethink our relationship to technology. As an institute for higher education, the time to not only learn but also practice "how to do things otherwise" is now.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Intro to the BDS movement

The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) is a Palestinian-led movement, active since 2005 in the fight for Palestinian rights.[23] Their strategy, inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement, is building up non-violent pressure on Israel through:

- **Boycotting**: cutting ties with and withdrawal of support from Israel's apartheid regime, complicit Israeli institutions (academic, sport, cultural, etc.), as well as Israeli and international companies complicit with the violation of Palestinian rights.
- **Divesting**: urging banks, pension funds, insurance companies, institutions such as universities, churches, etc. as well as Israeli and international companies to withdraw their investments from Israel.
- **Sanctions**: pressuring governments to abide by their legal obligation to *end* Israeli apartheid, rather than facilitating its continuation.

> Governments can and should take concrete steps such as ending trade with illegal Israeli settlements, ending military trade agreements and suspending Israel's membership in international organizations such as UN bodies and FIFA.

These actions are meant to target and put an end to international state, corporate and institutional complicity, without which the apartheid state of Israel would not be able to conduct its genocide of the Palestinian people.

The movement has grown. It launched and supported campaigns aligned with these three categories. Organisers emphasize that boycotts need to operate on all scales; consumer boycotts are not enough. Because individual action is difficult to maintain and involves certain privileges, their aim is building collective pressure on states, institutions and companies. For example, by strategically organising within a union or institution. In order to create a strong focus for public attention, they select a few strategic targets to apply pressure to. Unsurprisingly, among their high-priority targets is none other than Microsoft.[24]

What can we do as an academic community?

LEARNING FROM OTHER EXAMPLES

Some initiatives in the context of universities and higher education institutions in the Netherlands are already taking steps to move towards a technical infrastructure that does not rely on Microsoft (See 'INITIATIVES' section below).

Employees, alumni and students of the Radboud University, Utrecht University and Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Utrecht have, in the past year, sent open letters to their respective Executive Boards demanding an end to their institutional dependence on Microsoft in particular, and Big Tech in general.

While acknowledging that the institution cannot change its IT-infrastructure over night, they nonetheless demand the process to start immediately. They suggest steps that can be taken right away, such as running their own mail server, using their institutional influence within SURF (Cooperating University

Computing Facilities) and collaborating with other European universities towards the development of autonomous academic IT-infrastructure.

AS STUDENTS AND TUTORS AT THE WDKA

Here are some ideas of concrete steps we can take as students and tutors at the WdKA:

Collectively

- Learn from the example of other academic institutions in the Netherlands and sign the open letter to the Executive Board of the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences demanding the end of our dependence on Microsoft and other Big Tech companies for our digital infrastructure. You can read and sign the open letter here: https://cryptpad.fr/doc/#/3/doc/view/90088a45cea9f37a51b2a520ce28e902/embed/
- Learn from each other and start study groups that focus on the consequences of continued involvement and dependency on Big Tech and investigate alternative technological infrastructures. As study material, we can start with:
    - Digital Solidarity Networks, a curated list of alternative tools and services for e-mail, video calling, messaging, organising, collective working, etc.: https://pad.vvvvvvaria.org/digital-solidarity-networks
    - Infraresistance zine, an adaptation of the Digital Solidarity Networks list in the context of the genocide: https://vvvvvvaria.org/~systers/infraresistance.pdf
- Copy this zine and share it widely! Zine-copying party!!! ♪┏(・o･)┛♪
- Design flyer, sticker and poster campaigns that draw attention to this issue with calls to action.

Individually

- Remind your e-mail contacts of Microsoft's complicity with the Israeli-perpetrated genocide with an auto-reply and, as much as possible, use alternative e-mail providers.
- Sign the No Azure for Apartheid's petition at: noaa.cc/sign and send

a letter to Microsoft executives demanding that Microsoft ends its complicity in Israel's AI-powered genocide at: noaa.cc/letter.

- Boycott Microsoft products whenever possible. Here are some examples:
    - Microsoft Gaming products (Xbox, Bethesda Softworks, Activision, Blizzard Entertainment and King),
    - Xbox Game Pass Subscription,
    - Games owned by the company such as Minecraft, Call of Duty, Candy Crush, etc.,
    - Xbox Platform (e.g. Xbox Console or Xbox App on PC) & hardware (consoles, controllers, headsets, etc.),
    - Microsoft Surface Hardware (Laptops, Headsets, accessories).
    - Microsoft AI / Copilot,
    - Microsoft Operating System, Office Suite, Browser, Search services and other tools (Microsoft Edge, Microsoft Bing, MSN, Teams, Skype etc.).

INITIATIVES

Within the context of education, there have been several initiatives addressing institutional complicity with the Israeli-perpetrated Palestinian genocide. Here are a few:

- Dear organiser, worker in a public institution, tutor, student, activist, The Infra-structure resistance group, 2025
  →https://constantvzw.org/wefts/third-elephant.en.html
- Open brief aan het HKU College van Bestuur, HKU, 2025
  → https://pong.hku.nl/bigtechcfa/
- Open letter to the Executive Board, Radboud University, 2025
  → https://www.cs.ru.nl/~jhh/open-letter-big-tech.html
- Open letter to the Executive University Board: Calling for a transformation to digital autonomy, University of Utrecht, 2025
  → https://www.uu.nl/en/opinion/open-letter-to-the-executive-university-board-calling-for-a-transformation-to-digital-autonomy
- Radboud against Microsoft, 2025

→ https://www.cs.ru.nl/~hiemstra/radboud-against-microsoft/

- BDS's page on Microsoft and how to take action
  → https://bdsmovement.net/microsoft#take_action

WHAT MORE CAN WE DO TOGETHER?

Would you like to learn more and discuss strategies for divestment, alternatives and what we could do as a community at WdkA? To stay in the loop and get updates by registering here: https://codeagainst.org/mail/

This Zine was crafted with care and revolutionary energy by the Critical ICT group :-)

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1. "Microsoft cloud used in Israeli mass surveillance of Palestinians: Report." *Al Jazeera*, 7 Aug. 2025, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/8/7/microsoft-cloud-used-in-israeli-mass-surveillance-of-palestinians-report↩

2. Biesecker, Michael, Garance Burke and Sam Mednick. "Microsoft says it provided AI to Israeli military for war but denies use to harm people in Gaza." *AP News*, 17 May 2025, https://apnews.com/article/microsoft-israel-military-gaza-hamas-artificial-intelligence-20b2adb438b39ee9cb6eb2f52c1ae44a↩

3. Abraham, Yuval. "Leaked documents expose deep ties between Israeli army and Microsoft", *+972*, 23 Jan. 2025, https://www.972mag.com/microsoft-azure-openai-israeli-army-cloud/↩

4. IG Farben chemical company produced the Zyklon B used to commit genocide against millions of European Jews, Roma, homosexuals, socialists, disabled people and other civilians during the holocaust. Twenty-four defendants were judged for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including deportation, enslavement, torture and murder.↩

5. The Flick Kommanditgesellschaft was a large group of industrial companies active in coal and iron mines and steel plants, alongside their subsidiaries. Six high ranking executives were tried for war crimes and crimes against humanity (for participation in deportation and enslavement).↩

6. Krupp was the first weapons manufacturer in Germany during both World Wars. Twelve defendants were judged, partly for the same acts as the two aforementioned industrial groups.↩

7. Following the end of World War II, a court was established in occupied parts of Germany, by members of the allied forces, to prosecute German officials involved in several crimes committed by the Third Reich.↩

8. Davies, Harry, and Yuval Abraham. "'A Million Calls an Hour': Israel Relying on Microsoft Cloud for Expansive Surveillance of Palestinians." The Guardian, 7 Aug. 2025, www.theguardian.com/world/2025/aug/06/microsoft-israeli-military-palestinian-phone-calls-cloud.↩

9. Davies, Harry, and Yuval Abraham."Revealed: Microsoft Deepened Ties With Israeli Military to Provide Tech Support During Gaza War." The Guardian, 23 Jan. 2025, www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jan/23/israeli-military-gaza-war-microsoft.↩

10. Abraham, Yuval. "Microsoft storing Israeli intelligence trove used to attack Palestinians", *+972*, 6 Aug. 2025, https://www.972mag.com/microsoft-8200-intelligence-surveillance-cloud-azure/↩

11. "[…] the unit planned to transfer the data to the Amazon Web Services cloud platform instead, upon whose services the army has also grown increasingly dependent since October 7. Still, many other Israeli military projects involving Microsoft's services remain unaffected". Source: Abraham, Yuval. "Microsoft revokes cloud services from Israel's Unit 8200, following +972 exposé", *+972*, 25 Sept. 2025, https://www.972mag.com/microsoft-cloud-israel-8200-expose/↩

12. Grim, Ryan. “The Israeli Military Is One of Microsoft’s Top AI Customers, Leaked Documents Reveal”, *Dropsite News*, 23 Jan. 2025, https://www.dropsitenews.com/p/microsoft-azure-israel-top-customer-ai-cloud↩

13. Grim, Ryan. “The Israeli Military Is One of Microsoft’s Top AI Customers, Leaked Documents Reveal”, *Dropsite News*, 23 Jan. 2025, https://www.dropsitenews.com/p/microsoft-azure-israel-top-customer-ai-cloud↩

14. Davies, Harry, and Yuval Abraham.“Revealed: Microsoft Deepened Ties With Israeli Military to Provide Tech Support During Gaza War.” The Guardian, 23 Jan. 2025, www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jan/23/israeli-military-gaza-war-microsoft.↩

15. Mednick, Sam, et al. “How US Tech Giants Supplied Israel With AI Models, Raising Questions About Tech’s Role in Warfare”, *AP News*, 18 Feb. 2025, apnews.com/article/israel-palestinians-ai-weapons-430f6f15aab420806163558732726ad9.↩

16. “ICC to Ditch Microsoft Following US Sanctions.” *Scottish Legal News*, 3 Nov. 2025, www.scottishlegal.com/articles/icc-to-ditch-microsoft-following-us-sanctions.↩

17. Abraham, Yuval. “‘No restrictions’ and a secret ‘wink’: Inside Israel’s deal with Google, Amazon”, *+972*, 29 Oct. 2025, https://www.972mag.com/project-nimbus-contract-google-amazon-israel/↩

18. No Azure For Apartheid. ‘Microsoft escalates censorship & crackdown on Palestinians— No Azure for Apartheid campaign statement’, 22 May 2025, *Medium*, https://medium.com/@noazureforapartheid/microsoft-escalates-censorship-crackdown-on-palestinians-no-azure-for-apartheid-campaign-62a372438859↩

19. Keeslen, Ben. “2 Microsoft employees were fired after protesting the company’s AI contracts with Israel’s military”. 08 April 2025. *Quartz*, https://qz.com/microsoft-fires-workers-israel-ai-contract-protest-1851775225↩

20. M.I. “From Economy of Occupation to Economy of Genocide - (a/HRC/59/23) Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Occupied Since 1967 - Question of Palestine.” Question of Palestine, 19 Sept. 2025, https://www.un.org/unispal/document/a-hrc-59-23-from-economy-of-occupation-to-economy-of-genocide-report-special-rapporteur-francesca-albanese-palestine-2025/.↩

21. Murphy, Harry. Dealing With the Devil: The Triumph and Tragedy of IBM’s Business With the Third Reich. eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1284484.↩

22. AI project Lavender developed a ‘kill list’ in Gaza with over 37.000 Palestinians targeted for assasination, AI project “Where’s Daddy?” tracked Palestinians on that kill list, designed to help Israel target them at home with their families. AI system The Gospel was designed to intentionally destroy civilian infrastructure in Gaza. Source: “Lavender & Where’s Daddy: How Israel Used AI to Form Kill Lists & Bomb Palestinians in Their Homes”, 5 Apr. 2024, *Democracy Now*, https://www.democracynow.org/2024/4/5/israel_ai↩

23. For further reading on what is BDS, see “What is BDS”, https://bdsmovement.net/what-bds↩

24. For further reading on strategies, see “BDS Guide to Strategic Campaigning for Palestinian Rights”, https://bdsmovement.net/bds-guidelines/bds-guide-strategic-campaigning-palestinian-rights↩