

## Israeli Archaeological Congress Cancelled After Heritage Minister Calls to Bar Emek Shaveh Chair Prof. Rafi Greenberg

1 message

**Emek Shaveh** <talya@emekshaveh.org>

Fri, Apr 4, 2025 at 7:27 AM

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To: Lara Friedman <kmccarthy@fmep.org>



April 4, 2025

Dear friends,

In an unprecedented move, the organisers of Israel's premier professional event in archaeology – the *Archaeological Congress* – announced the cancellation of the conference, due to begin yesterday, following political pressure by the far-right Minister of Heritage, Amihai Eliyahu (Jewish Power party).

Held annually for nearly five decades, the Archaeological Congress is the largest and most significant gathering of archaeologists in Israel. It brings together hundreds of researchers, students, and heritage professionals from across the country to present new findings, debate current issues, and promote collaboration across institutions. This year the congress was to be held at the Israel Antiquities Authority's new campus in Jerusalem.

The Minister had demanded that Professor Raphael (Rafi) Greenberg, an archaeologist at Tel Aviv University and Chair of Emek Shaveh's Board of Directors, be barred from participating due to an [open letter](#) he penned in February criticising the "[First International Conference on Archaeology and Site Conservation of Judea and Samaria](#)." In response to this unprecedented attempt to interfere with the academic and professional content of the Congress, organisers made the decision to cancel the entire event.

**Emek Shaveh:** We regret, the cancellation of the congress, but extreme

actions require clear and courageous responses. This is a principled struggle for academic freedom and respect for both international and domestic law. We cannot allow political pressure to dictate scholarly discourse or professional participation. The academia must remain a space free of coercion. We commend the archaeological community for standing up for the independence of scientific archaeology and of academia as a whole.

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## Background

The controversy stems from a February conference co-hosted by the Civil Administration's Staff Officer for Archaeology and the Ministry of Heritage, which focused on archaeological activity in the West Bank. The event, was attended by Israeli and international scholars. In his open letter, Professor Greenberg described the gathering as “a showcase for the work of settler-adjacent archaeologists and their collaborators,” coinciding with political efforts to advance annexation of the West Bank through cultural heritage policy.

Greenberg also highlighted the absence of Palestinian voices and the use of archaeology as a tool of dispossession in the region. “You must also be aware,” he wrote, “that Israel and the settlers... have weaponised archaeology in Jerusalem and the West Bank, using it as a lever to dispossess Palestinians and enlarge the settler footprint.”

The conference drew widespread criticism, including a statement by the [Palestine Exploration Fund](#).

Haaretz covered the incident [here](#).

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