

## Episode 31: Omri Boehm

**Guest:** Prof. Dr. Omri Boehm, Associate Professor of Philosophy, The New School for Social Research (New York)

**Bio:** Omri Boehm is a philosopher and public intellectual whose work explores the intersections of politics, ethics, and universalism. Born in Israel, he studied philosophy at Tel Aviv University before earning his PhD at Yale. He is now Associate Professor of Philosophy at the New School for Social Research in New York and has become one of the most influential voices in debates on Israel/Palestine, identity politics, and the future of democracy. His most notable books include *Haifa Republic - A Democratic Future for Israel (Israel – eine Utopie)* and *Radical Universalism: Beyond Identity (Radikaler Universalismus. Jenseits von Identität)*, which won the 2024 Leipzig Book Award for European Understanding. Known for bringing a rare clarity in dissecting complex issues while resisting wrong alternatives and the reductionist thinking so often found around the Middle East conflict, even among intellectuals, Boehm discusses his vision of coexistence and peace in the region, particularly in light of the horrific events of October 7 and the war in Gaza.

**In this Episode:** Recorded on Friday, March 21, 2025, hosts Efe and Yusuf sit down with Prof. Omri Boehm to discuss his philosophical and political reflections on Israel/Palestine and the broader global context. The conversation begins with the Gaza war and the collapse of the ceasefire, with Boehm expressing concern over the deepening humanitarian crisis and the global risks of escalating violence. They then explore the wave of student protests on US campuses - the largest since the Vietnam War - and Boehm explains how these movements relate to his critique of identity politics. Drawing from *Radical Universalism*, he challenges postcolonial frameworks that portray Israel solely as a settler-colonial state and highlights their limitations in understanding the conflict. Boehm also addresses genocide accusations from human rights organizations and recent international legal actions, including arrest warrants from the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice's acceptance of South Africa's genocide case. He sharply distinguishes between legitimate legal proceedings and political campaigns aimed at delegitimizing Israel, reflecting on how free speech and democratic values are being tested in Germany, the US, and beyond. In the final section, Boehm presents his vision of an Israeli-Palestinian federation - the "Republic of Haifa" - as an alternative to the two-state solution. Drawing on Kant, he emphasizes friendship as an ethical guide in times of catastrophe, and the episode closes with his advice for young people seeking peace and justice and a one-sentence vision for the region's future.

### Links:

Boehm, Omri. *Haifa Republic: A Democratic Future for Israel*. New York Review Books, 2021. <https://www.nyrb.com/products/haifa-republic-a-democratic-future->

[for-israel?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.ullstein.de/werke/israel-eine-utopie/hardcover/9783549100073) (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)  
*Original German edition: Israel – eine Utopie.* Propyläen, 2020. <https://www.ullstein.de/werke/israel-eine-utopie/hardcover/9783549100073> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Boehm, Omri. *Radical Universalism: Beyond Identity.* New York Review Books, 2025.  
[https://www.nyrb.com/products/radical-universalism?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.nyrb.com/products/radical-universalism?utm_source=chatgpt.com)  
(Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

*Original German edition: Radikaler Universalismus. Jenseits von Identität.*  
Propyläen, 2022. <https://www.ullstein.de/werke/radikaler-universalismus/hardcover/9783549100417> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

### **Freundschaft in finsternen Zeiten**

<https://www.zeit.de/kultur/2024-03/leipziger-buchmesse-omri-boehm-judentum-freundschaft> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

On Antisemitism in the Student Movement:

Harvard Caps Poll of October 19, 2023: 62% of 18-24 year olds answered that October 7 „attacks on Jews were genocidal in nature“, but 51% of them answered they were „justified by Palestinian grievances.“ (p. 43). [https://harvardharrispoll.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/HHP\\_Oct23\\_KeyResults.pdf](https://harvardharrispoll.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/HHP_Oct23_KeyResults.pdf)  
(Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

A brochure the hosts mention in the interview published by the **Münster Police** classifies the accusation of genocide as a legally punishable act of “**incitement to hatred**” (*Volksverhetzung*, §130 StGB) (see p. 6). It was not withdrawn after the ICJ accepted South Africa’s genocide case in January 2024 and remains available online.

[https://muenster.polizei.nrw/sites/default/files/2024-01/231227\\_lka\\_informationsbrochure-nahostkonflikt.pdf](https://muenster.polizei.nrw/sites/default/files/2024-01/231227_lka_informationsbrochure-nahostkonflikt.pdf) (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

### **Dedication:**

*We dedicate this Podcast to all victims and survivors of October 7, the hostages and their families, to all innocent civilians killed and injured in Gaza and their grieving families and friends. To our dear guests Udi Goren, Khalil Sayegh, Sima and Mai who shared their losses so powerfully with us. To their families: Tal’s wife Ella Haimi, their children Nir, Einav, Udi and Lotan, who never got the chance to meet his father. To Khalil Sayegh’s mother and siblings, to Mai’s and Sima’s family, to her mother Bushra.*

*To the blessed memory of: Tal Haimi, Lara Sayegh, Jeris Sayegh, Mahmoud, Danny Darlington and Haim Perry.*

**Disclaimer:**

In each episode of this podcast, the invited guests speak on their own behalf. They share their experiences, assessments, and expert perspectives. These contributions are central to the multiperspectivity of the project but do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial team or producers.

**Legal & Historical Anchor Episodes:**

This podcast may include controversial legal terms of specific technical significance. Their legal applicability requires a thorough expert contextualization; for this, we refer to our legal chapter. All relevant terms of international law, its institutions, current controversies, and the state of jurisprudence are explained in the anchor episode with Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Claus Kreß LL.M. (Cambridge) (Episode 36). He is co-author of the Rome Statute, Special Advisor to the International Criminal Court, and Judge at the International Court of Justice in the parallel Gambia vs. Myanmar genocide case.

Historical matters are discussed from multiple perspectives in this podcast. Please check the cross-references in the shownotes of the respective episodes for details. All historically contested issues are addressed in the history anchor episode with Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Gudrun Krämer (Episode 21), author of the comprehensive work *A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel* (Princeton 2008), a standard reference in the field. For her scholarly achievements as a historian, she was awarded the *Preis des Historischen Kollegs* in 2025, the highest distinction in her discipline in Germany.