

Tel-Hai Opens First Academic Year as a University as Israel's Battered North Looks to Rebuild After Three Years of War

Israel's 11th university welcomes over 5,000 registered students as government investment approaches NIS 700M, bringing talent, research and jobs to the region

KIRYAT SHMONA, ISRAEL, October 21, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Tel-Hai University of Kiryat Shmona in the Galilee, today celebrated the opening of its first academic year as Israel's 11th research university, marking a major milestone in northern Israel's recovery after three years of war. The inauguration comes 21 years after the Israeli government's 2005 decision to convert Tel-Hai into a research university.

The ceremony, held at the university's Roadburg Campus in Kiryat Shmona, brought together Education Minister and Council for Higher Education Chair Yoav Kisch; Minister in the Finance Ministry Ze'ev Elkin, responsible for reconstruction in the South and North; leaders of the Council for Higher Education and its Planning and Budgeting Committee; the leadership of the Tekuma and Tnufa administrations; and university leaders.

More than 5,000 students have registered for the 2026–27 academic year, up from 4,700 last year and marking a return to pre-war enrollment levels. Enrollment stood at 4,400 during the first year of the war, when classes were held online. More than 70% of students come from outside the Eastern Galilee, bringing young people from across Israel to a region working to rebuild its communities and economy.

Yoav Kisch, Education Minister and Chair of the Council for Higher Education: "There is a direct investment of NIS 700 million in the university from the State of Israel's budget. The number one task is to increase the number of students and grow from year to year. On this day, the dream becomes reality. The university is breathing and flourishing, and it will be the engine of growth for Kiryat Shmona and the entire region."

Ze'ev Elkin, Minister in the Finance Ministry responsible for reconstruction in the South and North: "This is a moving day. When the government began planning the program for the reconstruction and development of the North, it was clear from the very first moment that establishing the university in the Galilee had to be the jewel in the crown. Despite all the difficulties, we rose to the challenge and, within a single year, completed the plans, went through the regulatory process, and turned something bordering on impossible into something possible.

There is no way to develop this region other than by turning Kiryat Shmona into a university city.”

Prof. Eliezer Shalev, M.D., President of Tel-Hai University: “This day belongs to our students, the first students beginning their studies at Tel-Hai University. Together with all the relevant government and regulatory bodies, we worked hard to turn an excellent college into a university. I am convinced that we will have an excellent university that will serve as an anchor for the flourishing of the entire region. Building the university at this particular time is the modern embodiment of pioneering spirit and practical Zionism. We are not just establishing an academic institution; we are building a strategic national and social anchor connected to the roots of this place.”

The university’s establishment is central to a broader effort to rebuild the Eastern Galilee, attract new residents and create skilled employment. Government investment has reached nearly NIS 700 million, alongside support from philanthropists and cross-sector investment. For Tel-Hai, a central priority is ensuring that more students remain in the Galilee after graduation, supported by new research, innovation and employment opportunities.

Eli Cohen, Director-General of Tel-Hai University: “As a native of Kiryat Shmona, I am deeply moved, both personally and nationally. The opening of the university’s first academic year is a historic and defining moment, the realization of a distant vision and a hope the Galilee has held for more than 20 years. The university’s establishment is a testament to revival, to resilience and to the new future we are building here in the North.”

Tel-Hai University operates three campuses: the Roadburg Campus and the West Campus in the Upper Galilee, and the Katzrin Campus. This academic year, it will operate four clusters, or multidisciplinary faculties: Social Sciences and Humanities; Life and Environmental Sciences; Education and Teaching; and the new Engineering and Advanced Computing cluster.

The university was established through joint work by the Tnufa LaTzafon (Momentum for the North) Administration, Tel-Hai’s leadership, government ministries, the Council for Higher Education and local authorities, with wide support from philanthropists in Israel and abroad. As part of its transition to a full research university, Tel-Hai has recruited dozens of new researchers across a range of fields, most of whom are returning to Israel from postdoctoral positions abroad. The new university status now enables Tel-Hai to offer advanced degree programs and expand its research activity in the region.

About Tel-Hai University of Kiryat Shmona in the Galilee

Tel-Hai, University of Kiryat Shmona in the Galilee is a rapidly growing research university addressing challenges in food security, sustainable agriculture, engineering, artificial intelligence and more. Through interdisciplinary applied research, academic excellence across the humanities, social sciences, education and other disciplines, and close collaboration with

industry and communities, the university is tackling some of the most pressing challenges of the 21st century while positioning the Galilee as a global hub for innovation.

Terri Shapiro

Number 10 Strategies

terri@number10strategies.com

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/951178458>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.