



# Faculty Spotlight: Prof. Liav Orgad

Despite his upbringing in one of Israel's most underprivileged neighborhoods, Prof. Liav Orgad has beaten the odds to become a world-renowned scholar.

**P**rof. **Liav Orgad's** story is one of a great academic talent who rose above his surroundings to become one of the world's most esteemed experts on constitutional identity, citizenship theory, and global migration. A senior lecturer at IDC Herzliya's Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy & Strategy, Orgad also heads the International Citizenship Law research group at the WZB Berlin Social Science Center, as well as the Global Migration Governance project at the European University Institute in Italy.

Orgad's book, "The Cultural Defense of Nations: A Liberal Theory of Majority Rights" (Oxford University Press, 2016), sold out within a few months and received international acclaim, and a second edition is being published. In the book, Orgad presents his thesis on immigrants, majority groups, and national identity, and outlines how liberal states can welcome immigrants without fundamentally changing their cultural heritage, abandoning their liberal traditions, or veering towards extreme nationalism.

"As both a liberal and a Zionist, I thought a lot about this issue and came up with the idea that there should be a liberal concept of majority rights through which the majority's culture and values can be unashamedly protected without the country being led to extreme right-wing politics," Orgad says. "Right now we are trapped between two extremes in the West – on the one hand we have right-wing radicals who are trying to bring us back to a romantic period that may have never existed, and on the other side we have left-wing radicals who are trying to take us to a utopian world that will never exist. But between these two extremes, there are ways to defend the majority, from a liberal perspective. Especially in light of global migration, and the fact that there might be cases when the majority becomes the

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minority, the majority should have some rights protected by democracy.”

Orgad was raised in the Shikun Hamizrach neighborhood of Rishon LeZion, the son of immigrants from Iraq and Turkey. After completing his army service in the IDF’s Spokesperson’s Unit, he was given a full scholarship to study at IDC Herzliya by the ISEF Foundation, which works to narrow Israel’s socio-economic gap by enabling gifted students from disadvantaged backgrounds to pursue higher education.

“The ISEF Foundation supported me all the way through my studies,” says Orgad. “I could not have attended IDC otherwise. Where I come from, even a high school diploma is considered an accomplishment.”

Orgad became the second student to enroll in the first class of IDC’s Law and Government track. “Studying at IDC was the best decision of my life,” he says. “I have spent the last couple of years at several top universities and there is no place like IDC. The vibe and feeling here make you feel you’re part of a pioneering project. It feels like a family.”

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In addition to his LL.B. and B.A. degrees from IDC, Orgad holds LL.D. and LL.M. degrees from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and an LL.M. degree from Columbia Law School.

He has been a fellow-in-residence at the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics at Harvard University, a visiting professor at Columbia Law School, a Marie Curie fellow at Freie Universitat Berlin, and a Fulbright scholar at NYU Law School. He has published in academic journals and has received numerous awards and grants, including the Russell Sage Presidential Authority Award, the Israel Science Foundation Grant, and the Dan David Scholarship Prize for “scholars of exceptional promise.” He was also chosen

by Globes magazine as one of Israel’s “Young Promising Leaders.”

In just the last year, Orgad has been awarded two prestigious research grants totaling \$3 million, one from the German Research Foundation and the second from the European Research Council. He is also a member of the Global Young Academy, where he heads the working group on Global Migration and Human Rights.

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“I owe my career to IDC,” says Orgad. In particular, he credits IDC President and Founder Prof. **Uriel Reichman**, the Radzyner Law School’s Prof. **Amnon Rubinstein**, and the Lauder School’s founding dean, Prof. **Ehud Sprinzak, z”l**, for always pushing him to succeed. During his studies, he was a research assistant for both Rubinstein and Sprinzak. “Those people took me under their wings and provided me with ideal conditions to flourish academically, helping me grow as a scholar and a person, tolerating my mistakes and celebrating my triumphs; my vision of Israeli society was shaped by them.”

Now a lecturer at the Lauder School after moving from the Radzyner Law School, Orgad teaches courses on global migration, Israel’s future as a Jewish and democratic state, national minorities, and constitutional identities. “My research topics focus on the future of the nation state, including Israel,” he says. “I’m lucky to research topics that I struggle with as a citizen of Israel. It’s not easy to be both liberal and Zionist – you have to make some compromises on both. But it can be done. This year we are celebrating 120 years since the First Zionist Congress in Basel. This gives us a broad perspective to assess what the main achievements and failures of Zionism have been and what can be done in the future. My vision for Israel is related to the dual character of Zionism – the particular and the universal. The particular is a sovereign Jewish state, and the universal is about being a light unto the nations.

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IDC also believes in both the particular and the universal – it’s a liberal and Zionist university. And I am proud to be part of a university that is not ashamed to say it.

“If a Nobel Prize were to be awarded for democratic achievement in recent decades, I think it should be granted to Israel,” says Orgad. “It’s easy to maintain a liberal democracy in Scandinavia, where you have 400 years of democratic tradition and your neighbors are Denmark and Sweden. If there was a computer in which you could feed Israel’s background data, there is no way it would come up with the conditions for a thriving democracy. There are improvements to be made, for example with the Arab minority and the issue of religion and state, but when you look at the broad picture, we are doing pretty well. The success of the Israeli democracy is just a miracle.” ★

– Ariel Rodal-Spieler



At a recent parlor evening in Germany: Jonathan Davis, vice president for External Relations and head of the Raphael Recanati International School, Prof. Liav Orgad, and the evening’s hosts, Lala and Artur Susskind.