

# While It Suspends Top Honor, Israel Summons Leftist Scientist for 'Blatantly McCarthyist' Hearing

The Education Ministry is withholding Israel Prize over claims of BDS support. Prof. Oded Goldreich's lawyer said he refuses to attend the hearing



**Professor Oded Goldreich in Tel Aviv last month.**Credit: Moti Milrod

**[Or Kashti](#)**

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Prof. Oded Goldreich, whose receipt of the Israel Prize in mathematics and computer science was revoked by Education Minister Yoav Gallant, was summoned to a hearing by the Education Ministry this week to discuss petitions and open letters he has signed over the last 15 years related to boycotts of Israel.

The summons, issued by Gallant, was part of the ministry's examination of whether Goldreich, a professor at the Weizmann Institute of Science, should be awarded the prestigious prize in light of [claims](#) that he supports the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement.

Following objections from Attorney General Avichai Mendelblit, Gallant scrapped his initial plan to hold an in-person hearing. Instead, Goldreich was asked for a written response to the accusations against him.

Goldreich's lawyer, Michael Sfard, said the hearing has "no legal point" and announced that his client won't cooperate with "the blatantly McCarthyist nature of the process."

The summons, signed by Gallant's adviser on the [Israel Prize](#), David Pelber, said that a decision on whether to award Goldreich the prize had yet been made. It asked him to explain his reasons for signing six petitions and open letters, as well as his position on them "at the time you signed them and today."

The most recent of the six documents was an international petition from March that urged the European Union to cease cooperation with Ariel University in the West Bank. The others were a 2019 petition to the German parliament opposing its decision that BDS is antisemitic; a 2014 article on possible justifications for boycotting Israel; a 2011 petition opposing an Israeli law that penalizes people who advocate anti-Israel boycotts; a 2008 petition urging the Methodist Church to divest from companies that, in the petitioners' view, enable the occupation to continue; and a 2005 letter to the editor of the Guardian arguing that boycotts help enforce international law.

Mendelblit has already told the [High Court of Justice](#) that three of these documents – the ones from 2019, 2014 and 2008 – don't justify overturning the prize jury's decision to give Goldreich the prize. But he said the most recent petition requires "legal clarification," which led the court to give Gallant one month to look into whether he could legally deny Goldreich the prize. Mendelblit hasn't said anything about the remaining two documents.

The summons also asked Goldreich to explain his activity in the group Academia for Equality, which seeks "to promote democratization, equality and access to higher education for all communities living in Israel"; his calls to stop cooperation between Israeli universities and the defense establishment; his "position in principle" on BDS; and his position on "boycotting Israeli academic institutions and academics, including Ariel University."

Goldreich told the prize jury that he "doesn't support BDS and never supported this organization."

Pelber's initial letter proposed an in-person hearing, but the next day, a senior staffer in the Education Ministry's legal department told Sfard that a corrected version would be forthcoming.

"In my worst nightmares, I never imaged seeing a document like the first letter," summoning Goldreich to a hearing "over his political views," Sfard wrote Pelber. He said his parents, who immigrated from Poland in the 1960s, had told him about such things, "but as someone born and raised here, I never imagined I'd see such a thing in Hebrew."

The Education Ministry declined to comment.