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Since France will soon be marking the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I, Prof. Arnon Sofer, incumbent of the Chaikin Chair of Geostrategy, from the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies was interviewed by the *Haaretz* newspaper on the subject. Prof. Sofer admitted that he was attracted to the battlefields of the First World War, precisely because they do not have a close connection to Israel and Judaism. "Jews also won medals in World War I, yet 25 years later they were sent to the extermination camps. Nevertheless, as an Israeli, one cannot help but be struck with the bare hill of Verdun," he said.



2

Taking the first steps: this week the order was given to begin construction of a pedestrian bridge between the access road to the University and the campus itself. Work is due to commence soon. This important initiative has mobilized the University, the Student Union and the Municipality of Haifa, and the project has been made possible thanks to the generous contribution of Sir Maurice Hatter.



3

The University's Friends Paul and Herta Amir, from the USA, visited the campus last week and met with President Amos Shapira. They also talked with returning scientists at the Faculty of Natural Sciences laboratory complex – the Amirs' support has enabled such scientists to return to Israel and carry out their work in this country. The couple also visited the Arts Centre, and viewed an exhibition of undergraduate art by students at the Department of Art.



4

It was a long and fascinating road which has now reached an end. Congratulations go out to the 2,614 "Masters Degree" and the 2,468 "Bachelor's Degree" graduates for the 2013-2014 academic year. "During your studies you acquired quite a bit of knowledge and I am convinced that each and every one of you is leaving here today knowing more than you did at the beginning of your studies. But I hope that you got much more than knowledge and facts: the ability to think critically, write, reach conclusions and know how to use those conclusions in completely different cases – that is the main gift that we here at the University of Haifa can give you," said University President Amos Shapira at one of the graduation ceremonies. Additionally, for the first time degrees were granted this year to students of international programs. Click here to view the photos from the first [three days](#) of the [ceremonies](#).



5

In a project which is the only one of its kind in the world, a collaboration between the Israeli Parliament and the University will establish a green research roof on the roof of the Knesset, as part of the "Green Knesset" project. Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein and University President Amos Shapira announced the initiative at a meeting at the office of the Speaker. "I am delighted and proud that the Knesset is becoming green not only in practical terms but also in research," Edelstein said, "I have a feeling that the green research roof, which will be established in cooperation with the Kadas Green Roofs Ecology Center at the University of Haifa, will serve as a model for other parliaments around the world who want to promote environmental research." [The Jerusalem Post](#) published a report on the initiative, as well being reported in other Hebrew language media. Dr Shay Levy, Director of Green Roofs Center was also interviewed by Israel Radio about this unique initiative.



6

"Many Palestinians are happy about the kidnapping of the teenage boys in the hope that it will lead to the release of prisoners. But the head of the Palestinian Authority knows that it could put an end to the political process and inflame the West - two moves that play directly into the hands of Hamas" wrote Dr. Ido Zelkovitz of The Ezri Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies and the Department of Middle Eastern History, in an opinion piece he wrote for news website *Ynet*.



7

Prof. Amazia Baram, Director of the Center for Iraq Studies, from the Department of Middle Eastern History, was interviewed by Israel Radio, in which he declared that "Iraq has been disbanded. Whether it is possible to reunite it or not is a key question, and this is something the U.S. administration is trying to do."



8

Can the 'Dead Sea' lead to the creation of life? An international study led by researchers of the Institute of Evolution has developed a genome from one of the fungi that manages to grow in the Dead Sea, enabling us to understand the evolutionary mechanisms they have developed over thousands of years to deal with exceptional levels of salt. "Aside from theoretical knowledge, as soon as we identify the genes responsible for salt resistance, we can transfer them to wheat, for example, and thus be able to grow wheat in desert areas and other salty environments, which could increase worldwide food production," said Prof. Eviatar Nevo, leader of the study, in a piece recently published in [Haaretz](#).



