

Resolution by the
38th General Assembly
of the HRK
on 14 May 2024
in Fulda

**Protecting universities as a
free space for discourse**

HRK German Rectors' Conference
The Voice of the Universities

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Universities are places of critical discourse, dialogue, and academic and social debate. Openness of participation, the substantiation of arguments put forward and an essentially respectful interaction are vital to this. Protests, demonstrations and provocations can also be part of this process, provided they pursue the goal of providing factual information, analysing, and communicating arguments or are permitted forms of expressing opinions. Universities thus fulfil the important task of making debate objective and educating society about democracy.

As soon as these principles are not adhered to and regular university operations are impaired or criminal offences have been committed or are clearly imminent, universities exercise their rights as property owners and regularly report the matter to the police. Universities expect the federal and state governments to place their trust in them with regard to such actions and to respect their autonomy and the resulting scope for discretion.

In this context, individual academics and university leaders have been severely criticised in the press and on social media. This approach is unacceptable. It necessitates a social debate and, if necessary, accompanying measures under press law.