



BRISMES

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies, 71-75 Shelton Street, Covent Garden, London WC2H 9JQ

Email: office@brismes.org

Website: www.brismes.ac.uk

BRISMES Committee on Academic Freedom Statement of Support for the Centre for Lebanese Studies

The Committee on Academic Freedom of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) expresses its support for the Centre for Lebanese Studies (CLS), which recently and abruptly had its partnership with the Lebanese American University (LAU) terminated. Founded in 1973, BRISMES is the largest national academic association in Europe focused on the study of the Middle East and North Africa. It is committed to supporting academic freedom and freedom of expression, both within the region and in connection with the study of the region, both in the UK and globally.

On the 3rd of February, CLS was informed by Dr Michel Mawad, President of LAU, that their partnership would be terminated, citing the inclusion of the LAU logo without prior approval on a recent statement published by CLS and claiming that the statement had jeopardized LAU's interests and its relationship with the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education. The statement was a collective response by the widely-respected Lebanon Policy and Research Network to the government's recent decision to stop afternoon classes for Syrian students. The governmental decision has been widely condemned - both within Lebanon and internationally - for violating children's rights to education.

BRISMES' Committee on Academic Freedom shares [the concerns voiced by CLS](#) regarding the LAU president's comments, which suggest that the Ministry may somehow sanction an educational institution based on the expert statements made by researchers affiliated to it. Even more concerning is that the LAU would sever its ties with well-respected researchers and research institutions on the basis of their policy work.

It is vital that academics - individually and collectively - are free to report the findings of their work and to conduct public advocacy based on their expertise without fear of a loss of privileges or other punitive measures. Researchers and research institutions have a key role to play in helping support and improve education in Lebanon, but they cannot effectively do so when their academic freedom is undermined or restricted. It is incumbent upon both governments and university leaders to support and defend this academic freedom.

BRISMES' Committee on Academic Freedom wishes to express its support for the Centre for Lebanese Studies and its appreciation for the vital work that it does in Lebanon, the Middle East and the UK.

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