



BRISMES

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies

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

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Professor Shitij Kapur
Vice-Chancellor and President, King's College London

Professor Adam Fagan
Vice President (Education and Success), King's College London

Professor Frans Berkhout
Assistant Principal (Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression), King's College London

Sent by email

3 November 2025

Dear Professor Kapur, Professor Fagan and Professor Berkhout,

We are writing on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) to express our profound concern about the treatment of Mr Usama Ghanem, a student of International Relations at your institution, who has been indefinitely suspended from his studies. As a result of this suspension, Mr Ghanem faces the prospect of being forced to return to Egypt, where there are credible and serious risks to his safety and wellbeing.

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.

We understand that Mr Ghanem has been subjected to disciplinary procedures by the university on three occasions since June 2024, and that on all occasions these disciplinary procedures related to his participation in protests against Israel's war in Gaza. We understand that, as a result of the most recent investigation, he was given an indefinite suspension, which he is currently appealing, and that the disciplinary committee acknowledged that he would be required to return to Egypt during the period of his suspension.

We are deeply concerned by this decision, given Mr Ghanem's personal circumstances. [Reports](#) indicate that he and members of his family were previously imprisoned and tortured in Egypt, and that he continues to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result. Returning to Egypt would



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place him at grave risk. We understand that King's College London is fully aware both of the likelihood that his suspension will lead to removal from the UK and of the dangers he faces on return to Egypt.

We acknowledge that the university is under a legal obligation to report the absences or suspensions of international students of more than 60 days to the Home Office. We note, however, that the suspension of a student - and the length of the suspension given - is entirely within the university's purview. We would furthermore note that the university has a duty of care to all its students, and would argue that Mr Ghanem's history and the potential consequences of his return to Egypt should be given substantial weight in any disciplinary decision.

This case also arises within a broader context of growing restrictions on freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and protest on UK campuses, particularly regarding the situation in Palestine. This has been documented by, among others, the [Special Rapporteur](#) on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. It is vital that universities remain spaces of open dialogue and critical inquiry, where students' rights to free expression and peaceful protest are fully protected.

We therefore urge King's College London to reconsider Mr Ghanem's suspension, to review its disciplinary and protest-related policies to ensure they do not penalise lawful expression, and to take all necessary steps to allow him to continue his studies — and to remain in safety — in the United Kingdom.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Nicola Pratt
BRISMES President

Dr Lewis Turner
Chair, BRISMES Committee on Academic Freedom

On behalf of the BRISMES Committee on Academic Freedom

To read previous letters and statements from BRISMES CAF, please visit the [BRISMES website](#).

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