



BRISMES

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies

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BRISMES Committee on Academic Freedom Statement on the Expulsion of SOAS Student Haya Adam

The British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) Committee on Academic Freedom expresses deep concern over the recent decision by SOAS to expel Haya Adam, a second-year Law and International Relations student and president of the SOAS Palestine Society, following a disciplinary hearing on 8 August 2025. This decision raises serious questions about freedom of expression and the treatment of student activists.

On 21 July, we wrote privately to the SOAS Vice-Chancellor to express our concern that none of the reported actions attributed to Ms Adam appeared to meet any reasonable threshold for permanent exclusion. Expulsion is an extreme sanction, generally reserved for the most serious or repeated forms of misconduct, such as physical assault, sexual violence, or sustained harassment. Applying it in this case appears disproportionate, especially as it will create potentially life-altering repercussions. Her expulsion comes after she had already been subject to an indefinite suspension, which was in place for a year.

Given that Ms Adam is an Arab woman of colour, it is particularly important to consider the broader implications of this decision, including the potential for a chilling effect on student expression. Such actions risk encouraging self-censorship—particularly among students from marginalised backgrounds—who may already feel their voices are unwelcome or scrutinised more harshly.

According to [Middle East Eye](#), the disciplinary panel found that Ms Adam breached the university's code of conduct over a video posted on 16 January to the student encampment's Instagram page. In the video, she criticised a SOAS student union co-president, stating that their tenure had “only served institutional oppression” and calling them a “careerist.” The panel ruled that these remarks amounted to “harassment,” even though the co-president in question previously declined to call Ms Adam's post harassment.

This interpretation of “harassment” represents a troubling overreach. Under UK law, harassment requires conduct that is unwanted and has the purpose or effect of violating dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment because of or connected to a protected characteristic, and/or is a course of conduct that causes alarm or distress. Furthermore, the August 2025 Office for Students [guidance](#) to prevent and address harassment and sexual misconduct, makes clear that universities should follow the definitions of harassment provided in Section 26 of the Equality Act 2010 and Section 1 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. Political criticism



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of elected representatives, however robust, is a fundamental part of democratic engagement and public accountability.

While [SOAS](#) asserts that it has not expelled students for their pro-Palestine views or protests, the disciplinary action against Ms Adam followed comments in which she criticised what she perceived as a lack of action by elected student officials regarding Israel's genocide of the people of Gaza. Ms Adam has described her expulsion as "a dangerous precedent" for UK higher education, warning that it risks signalling to students that their involvement in pro-Palestine activism could lead to the most severe disciplinary sanctions.

We call on SOAS to:

1. **Reinstate Haya Adam immediately.**
2. **Review its policies and their application** to ensure they fully support, rather than restrict, students' rights to freedom of peaceful protest and political expression.

BRISMES Committee on Academic Freedom stands in solidarity with all students facing punitive measures for exercising their rights to free expression within the law and peaceful protest.

*BRISMES Committee on Academic Freedom
4 September 2025*

*To read previous letters and statements from BRISMES CAF, please visit:
[Committee on Academic Freedom](#)*

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