



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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Chairwoman of the Flemish Parliament
Brussels, Belgium

Giorgia Meloni
Prime Minister of Italy
Rome, Italy

Sent by Email

9 October 2025

Your Excellencies,

We are writing to you regarding Dr Ahmadreza Djalali, an Iranian-Swedish scientist arrested and imprisoned in Iran since 2016, who [has just been confirmed alive](#). Dr Djalali is faculty member in the European Masters' Program in Disaster Medicine convened by the Università degli Studi del Piemonte Orientale and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. The news that Dr Djalali is still alive [follows months of uncertainty about his life and health](#). While we were very relieved to hear this latest update, and thank you for your efforts in securing this important information, we call upon you to continue to put pressure on the Iranian government to reverse Dr Djalali's death sentence and release him.

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.

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Dr Djalili was imprisoned in Iran in 2016 while visiting the country by invitation of the University of Tehran and University of Shiraz. In 2017, after a forced confession, he was sentenced to death on charges of espionage and has since endured the torment of imminent execution since 2020. Dr Djalili initiated a hunger strike, in the hope of bringing visibility to his case. Additionally, his health conditions have significantly worsened and he suffered a heart attack in 2025. [On 5 June 2025, several UN special rapporteurs wrote to the authorities to call for Dr Djalili's release.](#)

Dr Djalili's situation is not isolated but reflects a wider pattern of repression targeting academics in Iran. Since the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement, dozens of scholars have faced dismissal, forced retirement, or imprisonment under state policies designed to purge academia of critical voices. Many of these academics have not been allowed to return to their academic positions, and some continue to face legal consequences or remain in jail. These concerns were formally highlighted in the past in a [joint letter from the Committees on Academic Freedom of BRISMES, SeSaMO, and MESA](#) to the Iranian authorities, who have not engaged with the concerns we outlined. Many academics are pressured into cooperation with security and intelligence bodies, while others who refuse face exclusion, intimidation, or worse.

We respectfully ask that you contact the Iranian authorities to demand the immediate reversal of Dr Djalili's death sentence, a full reconsideration of the charges against him, and his prompt release.

We thank you for your attention and look forward to your response. This letter will be published on our website, as per standard practice.

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:
[Committee on Academic Freedom](#)

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