



BRISMES

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies

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Statement on the Targeting of Universities and Research Institutions in Iran

The Committee on Academic Freedom of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) expresses its unequivocal condemnation of the recent targeting of universities, schools and research institutions across Iran by the United States and Israel.

Universities are protected civilian institutions under international humanitarian law. Reports of widespread and repeated attacks on centres of higher education and scientific research across multiple Iranian provinces represent a deeply troubling escalation. Such actions may constitute violations of international law and, if substantiated, could amount to war crimes.

[Reports](#) indicate that at least sixteen universities and research centres have been damaged by military strikes. The [documented damage](#) is extensive and includes destruction to classrooms, laboratories, libraries, dormitories, administrative buildings, critical research infrastructure as well as historic buildings. These attacks are not confined to Tehran and Isfahan; universities in [West Azerbaijan](#), [Ilam](#), [Bushehr](#), Chabahar in [Sistan and Baluchestan](#), [Khuzestan](#), and [Hamedan](#) have also been affected.

Particularly alarming is the apparent pattern of strikes affecting leading technology and science universities, including several of Iran's most prominent engineering institutions. These include major institutions such as [Sharif University of Technology in Tehran](#), [Iran University of Science and Technology](#), and [Isfahan University of Technology](#). The strike on Tehran's [Pasteur Institute](#), a key public health and research facility, raises additional concerns regarding the targeting of institutions essential to societal well-being.

We are also deeply disturbed by the growing loss of life in Iran. More than 168 people, including 110 [children](#), in the city of Minab were killed as a [result of attacks](#) on a school by the United States on the first day of the war. The Ministry of Science, Research and Technology of Iran has also [reported](#) that at least five university professors and more than 60 students have been killed. The Committee further notes the killing of [Dr. Saeed Shamghadri](#), an academic at Iran University of Science and Technology, [alongside members](#) of his family, in what appears to be part of a long-standing [pattern](#) by Israel of assassinating Iranian scientists in order to undermine Iran's nuclear programme.

These attacks are not only assaults on physical infrastructure but also on the intellectual and educational foundations of Iranian society. Universities play a vital role in fostering knowledge, critical inquiry, and international academic collaboration. Their destruction threatens the future of



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higher education, undermines scientific progress, and deprives generations of students of opportunities for learning and development.

We call on the UK government to:

- Urge respect for international humanitarian law and the protected status of educational institutions;
- Demand an immediate end to attacks on universities, laboratories, and civilian infrastructure;
- Demand an immediate end to the targeted killings of academics and researchers;
- Call for independent investigations into these incidents and press for accountability where violations are found.

We also urge the international academic community and relevant international organisations, including scholarly associations, to speak out against these attacks and to take meaningful steps to defend academic freedom and the integrity of higher education worldwide.

The targeting of universities is an attack not only on a nation but on humanity's shared pursuit of knowledge. Silence on such violations of international law will inevitably set a dangerous precedent that may be replicated across different conflict theatres. It is, therefore, incumbent on members of the academic community worldwide to urgently and vocally stand up against such repeated transgressions.

We stand in solidarity with university staff and students in Iran, Lebanon and Palestine as well as in all other conflict-affected areas.

Committee on Academic Freedom

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES)

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