



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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Dr Massoud Pezeshkian, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Dr Hossein Simayi Sarraf, Minister of Science, Research and Technology, Islamic Republic of Iran
Mr. Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Eje'i, Chief of Judiciary of Islamic Republic of Iran

c/o
Mr. Seyed Ali Mosavi
Ambassador of Islamic Republic of Iran in the UK

Sent by Email: iranconsulate.lon@mfa.gov.ir, iranemb.lon@mfa.gov.ir

17 November 2025

Your Excellencies,

We are writing on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) to express our deep concern regarding recent developments affecting academic freedom in the Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly the reported arrests of scholars during November 2025.

We understand that since 3 November 2025, security forces in Tehran have detained several researchers and writers. We welcome the fact that some were held only briefly and have since been released. Nevertheless, we remain deeply concerned that these arrests may form part of a broader pattern of pressure on academic freedom in Iran, which would appear to be inconsistent with the protections afforded under Iran's constitution and its international legal obligations. We have [written to you previously](#) about similar matters.

We are particularly concerned by the recent arrests of and pressures reportedly directed toward academics engaged with Iran Academia, the online virtual university that facilitates independent teaching, research, and scholarly collaboration. Any actions that may discourage individuals from participating in an educational platform risk undermining legitimate scholarly activity, contributing to a climate of fear, and limiting intellectual exchange both inside Iran and internationally. Such developments would be at odds with internationally recognised standards of academic freedom.

Reports of detentions without clear charges or due process raise further questions about compliance with Iran's obligations under international law. As a party to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Iran has committed to upholding the rights to education, freedom of expression, and participation in cultural, social, political and academic life. UNESCO and other international bodies have likewise affirmed that academic freedom includes the liberty of individuals to freely express views about their institutions and research without fear of repression.

We join scholars and academic associations across Iran and the international community including our sister organisation the [Middle East Studies Association \(MESA\)](#) in expressing concern about these



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developments and in affirming the vital role of critical thought and academic freedom in the advancement of knowledge and the health of civil society.

In light of these concerns, we respectfully urge the Iranian authorities to take the following immediate steps:

– Cease all harassment and pressure on academics linked to Iran Academia.

Although some recently detained scholars now been released, ongoing reports of questioning, pressure or restrictions on individuals associated with Iran Academia, remain troubling. We encourage measures that would reassure the academic community that such pressures will cease.

– Guarantee that no scholar is re-arrested or subjected to further intimidation.

While the temporary releases are welcome, we call on the authorities to ensure that those affected are not subjected to renewed questioning, surveillance, travel restrictions, or threats to their professional activities.

– Ensure a fair and transparent legal process.

Should any charges be brought against these or other individuals, we respectfully request that they be disclosed publicly and that all proceedings comply fully with Iran's obligations under the ICCPR. This includes the right to legal counsel, the right to be informed of charges, and the right to a fair and impartial trial.

– Uphold academic freedom and freedom of expression.

We encourage the authorities to ensure that academics, students, and writers are able to conduct scholarly work, participate in online teaching, and express their views peacefully without fear of harassment or detention, in line with internationally recognised principles of academic freedom.

We look forward to your response. As is our standard practice, this letter will be published on our website.

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](#)