



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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Rector Rasmus Antoft
Pro-rector Bjørn Thomassen
Pro-rector Kristin Balslev Munksgaard
University Director Henrik Zobbe

Sent by Email: rektor@ruc.dk; prorektor-forsk@ruc.dk; prorektor-udd@ruc.dk; direktoer@ruc.dk

21 October 2026

Dear Rector Antoft, Pro-rector Thomassen, Pro-rector Munksgaard and Director Zobbe,

We write on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom (CAF) of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) to express our profound concern regarding the dismissal of Professor Michelle Pace from her position as Professor of Global Studies in the Department of Social Sciences and Business at Roskilde University in Denmark.

Founded in 1973, BRISMES is committed to promoting academic freedom and freedom of expression, both within the region and in relation to its study in the United Kingdom and internationally. Our Committee on Academic Freedom monitors and defends academic freedom in the research, study and teaching of the Middle East and North Africa in the UK and Europe, as well as across the region itself.

Professor Pace is an internationally recognised expert on areas including EU-Middle East relations, the politics of Palestine/Israel, and Danish immigration policy. She is regularly cited and interviewed by international news media, and has furthermore been a dedicated and successful teacher at your institution, becoming the first academic at Roskilde to ever win a student-awarded teaching prize in two consecutive years.

The Committee understands that, after having worked at Roskilde University for 12 years, Professor Pace was informed on 16 December 2025 that the university intended to terminate her employment “on the basis of difficulties in cooperation and unacceptable behaviour on [her] part towards several of [her] colleagues.”

The circumstances surrounding this decision raise serious concerns about procedural fairness, freedom of expression and academic freedom. Firstly, Professor Pace did not receive any warning - verbal or written - regarding her conduct prior to receiving an email notifying her that the university intended to terminate her contract. The university management did not organise mediation between Professor Pace and those who allegedly found her behaviour unacceptable. Rather, the available [reporting](#) raises concerns that the university may have sought evidence to support a decision to dismiss Professor Pace, rather than conducting an impartial assessment of the allegations.



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Secondly, [press reports](#) indicate that at least some of the alleged behaviour in question was related to Professor Pace's views and speech on the situation in Palestine, and particularly in Gaza, topics on which she holds considerable expertise. Over a sustained period in 2024, Professor Pace was put under severe pressure to name individual students involved in a campus solidarity movement with Gaza. As part of her dismissal process, she was accused of "flooding her colleagues and others with emails about Gaza," and of misattributing the organiser of an event on Gaza, a mistake that she willingly and immediately corrected when it was drawn to her attention.

While we note that the university has [denied](#) that Professor Pace's termination was related to her political positions or participation in public debates, we are mindful of a wider pattern of the [repression](#) of Palestinian solidarity across Europe, and more specifically restrictions on freedom of expression and academic freedom with regard to Palestine, which is documented in BRISMES CAF's recent [annual report](#). The circumstances of this case raise similar concerns that professional and regulatory frameworks are being applied in ways that disproportionately and unfairly affect those expressing solidarity with Palestinians. In Denmark specifically, over the course of these events there was also an environment of [political pressure](#) on universities to reduce the number of international students they accepted to align with the government's immigration policy. These are topics on which Professor Pace has considerable academic expertise, and on which she has been outspoken.

Thirdly, these events call into question whether Roskilde University is upholding its obligations under Danish, European and international law. Under the Danish Universities Act (universitetsloven), Danish universities are legally obliged to safeguard the research freedom of their staff members. Furthermore, under the 2025 Act on Freedom of Expression for Public Employees, public employees - which for the purposes of the Act includes university employees - may not be subjected to negative employment-related reactions or retaliations because of their lawful speech, and may not be prevented or attempted to be prevented from making such statements. Academic freedom and freedom of expression are further protected by numerous human rights instruments and international organizations of which Denmark is a signatory or member. The European Court of Human Rights treats academic freedom as a special concern of the Article 10 freedom of expression clause, Article 13 of the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights explicitly guarantees academic freedom, while Article 19 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights protects freedom of expression.

The Committee is deeply concerned that the circumstances surrounding Professor Pace's dismissal raise serious questions about procedural fairness, academic freedom and freedom of expression, and potentially about Roskilde University's compliance with its obligations under Danish, European and international law.

We therefore call upon Roskilde University to:

1. **Commission an independent and impartial investigation** into the circumstances surrounding Professor Pace's dismissal, including whether established procedures were followed, whether the decision was proportionate and supported by sufficient evidence, and whether her lawful academic and public expression, particularly concerning Palestine, played any role in the decision.



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2. **Ensure accountability for any procedural failures or violations of academic freedom identified by the investigation**, including taking appropriate remedial action and acknowledging publicly any institutional wrongdoing, while respecting Professor Pace's wishes and legal rights.
 3. **Review and strengthen the institution's policies and procedures for protecting academic freedom and freedom of expression**, including establishing clear safeguards against the use of disciplinary or managerial processes to penalise lawful academic and political expression, and ensuring that allegations of workplace misconduct are addressed through fair, transparent and proportionate procedures.
 4. **Publish the investigation's findings and recommendations**, subject to appropriate confidentiality and data protection requirements, and commit to a clear timetable for implementing any necessary institutional reforms.

These measures are essential both to ensure accountability for the treatment of Professor Pace and to reaffirm Roskilde University's responsibility to protect the academic freedom and freedom of expression of all members of its academic community.

As is standard practice, we will publish this letter on our website, and will be happy to also publish your reply.

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

cc. Roskilde University Board of Directors:

Jesper Nygård, Dea Cecilie Forchhammer, Henric Johnson, Marie Stærke, Line Groes, Kristian Nagel Delica, Eline Bjerrum Brandrup, Mads Hansen Bager, Lauge Lunding Bach

To read previous letters and statements from BRISMES CAF, please visit:

[Committee on Academic Freedom](#)