



BRISMES

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies, 71-75 Shelton Street, Covent Garden, London WC2H 9JQ

Email: office@brismes.org

Website: www.brismes.ac.uk

Prof. Dr Klaus Beckmann, President
Helmut Schmidt University
Sent by Email: praesident@hsu-hh.de

29th August 2025

Dear Prof. Dr Beckmann,

I am writing on behalf of the Council of Trustees of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies to express our deep concern regarding the forthcoming keynote lecture by Dr Ofra Graicer, an instructor in the Israeli Defence Forces, entitled “Extracting Order from Chaos: Lessons Learned from Military Design in an Eight-Front War.” We understand that this lecture is due to take place next Wednesday, 3rd September.

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.

We are profoundly concerned that you have chosen to invite Dr Graicer to give a keynote lecture, in which we understand she will focus on the operations of the Israeli Defence Forces since 7th October 2023, at a time when these operations in Gaza continue to cause extensive civilian harm. Israel’s military campaign in Gaza continues to claim Palestinian lives daily, while destroying and damaging homes, livelihoods and civilian infrastructure. Around 90 percent of the population have been displaced and at least 62,000 have been killed, over 80% of whom - [according to](#) Israeli statistics - were civilians. The true death toll is likely very significantly higher.

These operations have been characterised by the International Court of Justice as plausibly genocidal, and the International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants against Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant on the basis of reasonable suspicion of war crimes and crimes against humanity pursuant to Art. 58 of the Rome Statute. We also note that the Federal Government of Germany has [recently](#) suspended arms exports to Israel for use in the Gaza Strip.

As part of its military campaign, Israeli forces have clearly and repeatedly targeted educational institutions, including both universities and academics, in a wide-ranging campaign that [United Nations experts](#) have deemed a campaign of ‘scholasticide’ that is “aimed at dismantling the very foundation of Palestinian society.” According to [humanitarian organisations](#) working in Palestine, nearly 90% of school buildings in the Gaza Strip have been directly hit or damaged, while every university in Gaza has been destroyed or heavily damaged.



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We are concerned that hosting this keynote could be perceived as legitimising actions that violate international law, including the deliberate destruction of educational infrastructure. As state institutions, universities have an obligation to avoid supporting or normalising such violations, especially in cases of alleged genocide. A university whose students are mainly young (aspiring) officers of one of Europe's largest militaries carries a particularly heavy responsibility, as institutional decisions weigh on future officers' understandings of human rights and international law.

We urge you to reconsider and to withdraw your invitation to Dr Graicer.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Nicola Pratt

BRISMES President

On behalf of the BRISMES Council of Trustees

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