



BRISMES

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies

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BRISMES Statement on NUS Leadership's Response to the Open Letter of 11 July 2025

The British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) expresses its profound concern regarding the response of the National Union of Students (NUS) leadership to the [open letter](#) of 11 July 2025, which BRISMES co-signed alongside student representatives and civil society organisations.

The letter raised urgent concerns about the NUS's failure to represent students on critical issues, its inaction in the face of the widespread suppression of student activism across UK campuses, and its silence in the context of the ongoing genocidal war and humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. Rather than engaging constructively with these substantive concerns, the NUS leadership has [reportedly](#) embarked on a campaign of intimidation against the elected student officers who signed the letter. This campaign—targeting individual officers through pressure on Students' Union Chief Executives—appears aimed at suppressing legitimate expressions of political belief, including anti-Zionist positions, which are protected under UK law.

We are particularly troubled by reports that respected academic and civil society bodies, including BRISMES, have been disparaged in the course of these efforts, as part of a broader strategy to delegitimise and silence voices critical of the State of Israel and supportive of Palestinian rights. This approach is incompatible with the principles of free expression and democratic student representation that the NUS is meant to uphold.

As a scholarly society committed to the rigorous study of the Middle East and to the defence of academic freedom, BRISMES stands firmly against any efforts to intimidate or marginalise students, scholars, or civil society organisations on the basis of their engagement with issues relating to Israel-Palestine. The NUS's current approach risks further eroding trust among students and stakeholders and undermines the very principles of pluralism and open debate upon which the academic and student communities depend.

We call on the NUS leadership to:

1. Cease all forms of intimidation and pressure against elected student representatives;
2. Engage in meaningful dialogue with the signatories of the 11 July letter;
3. Respect the right to express anti-Zionist views in line with the protections afforded under the Equality Act;
4. Uphold the principles of free expression and democratic accountability that students across the UK expect of their national representative body.

BRISMES will continue to monitor the situation closely and to support students, academics, and organisations facing pressure for exercising their rights to speak on matters of urgent global concern.

BRISMES Council, 30 September 2025