



# BRISMES

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies

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## ***BRISMES Presents Award for Services to Middle Eastern Studies to Professor Nicola Pratt***

It is the greatest pleasure to present the BRISMES service award to Professor Nicola Pratt.

Since this prize is awarded by a community of people to Nicola for her service to that community, this morning, as I was preparing this tribute, I decided to carry out field research at the St Andrews breakfast hall. I wandered among the tables and asked several people to say in a few words what they think about Nicola. I did not tell them why I was conducting the interview to ensure the study would be objective.

One said Nicola is an activist and talked about her activism with women's groups in Egypt and her ongoing critique of the Sisi regime.

Another described her as an anti-war campaigner and mentioned her activities against the war in Iraq.

A third talked about her struggle for Palestinian rights. A fourth said she is the best mentor one could ever hope for, the most generous academic I have ever met. And a fifth said, Nicola, oh she builds communities.

One well known scholar talked about how Nicola's work on gender in the Middle East changed the way she understood politics, and another emphasized the combination of empirical rigor and theorization that made him an avid Pratt reader.

From my relatively short acquaintance with Nicola—we met about three years ago—I could add to this list several other characteristics that make her stand out, but I will only say that the way she led BRISMES through tumultuous times was simply remarkable. She is soft spoken, but firm, knows how to listen, but knows when the time comes to reach a decision, and like most of the interviewees in this study I also found her to be an extremely generous, supportive and wise person.

Nicola is the author of several books, including most recently *Embodying Geopolitics: Generations of Women's Activism in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon*, which was the winner of the Susan Strange Best Book Prize for 2020. She has also written numerous articles and book chapters, was awarded several competitive grants and served as a PI on a number of research projects. She is a stellar academic that has made a mark on a number of fields, not least democratisation and gender and politics in the Middle East.

Between 2010 and 2013, she was the co-director of an international research partnership between Warwick and Birzeit University. She was Associate Editor of the British Journal of

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Middle Eastern Studies for 6 years, a trustee of the Council for British Research in the Levant and Vice President of BRISMES.

During her tenure at BRISMES, she together with a few other people radically transformed the association putting issues that are close to her heart centre stage. She helped democratise the association, breaking down hierarchies that existed for decades, she emphasized the need to support students and early career scholars, she continuously struggled for academic freedom and freedom of speech, and gender politics was key to everything she did.

I could go on and on, but I will stop here and only end with a quote from one of my interviewees this morning. “You want me to say a few words about Nicola,” she asked, “Well Nicola is lovely, everyone who knows her loves her.” And Nicola’s own love for the world, I might add has been central to the evolving BRISMES, to the changes she has led, and to the collegial atmosphere she has created.

*Neve Gordon, Vice President of BRISMES, on behalf of BRISMES Council, 4 July 2022*