



BRISMES

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies

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CAF statement in solidarity with Iran-based academic staff and students

We write on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) to express our solidarity with academic staff and students in Iran who have been protesting following the death of Jina Mahsa Amini. 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.

On September 16, 2022, the Iranian morality police of Iran's Law Enforcement Command arrested 22-year-old Jina Mahsa Amini for not wearing the hijab in accordance with the government's strict dress code for women and while in custody they allegedly killed her. Indeed, according to eyewitness reports, during her detention, Ms. Amini was beaten over the head several times and subsequently slipped into a coma at Vozara Detention Center, before dying. Dr. Hossein Karampour, who heads the Medical Council's Bandar Abbas branch, wrote in an official letter to Dr. Mohammad Raiszadeh, the Head of the Medical Council of the Islamic Republic of Iran, that Ms. Amini's symptoms were consistent with concussion and internal bleeding as a result of blows to the head.

Ms. Amini's death triggered nation-wide mobilization against the violent treatment of women by the Islamic Republic's morality police, which has, over the years, targeted women through mass arrests, forced confessions, imprisonment, torture, and extra-judicial killings. A few days after Ms. Amini's death, over 200 academics based in Iran signed a **petition**, stressing the right of Iranian women to freely choose their own dress code, while calling on the government to abolish the morality police and protect citizenship rights for all Iranians. Student organisations have been protesting since Ms. Amini's death, intensifying their actions after university leaders decided to close down campuses and move classes online in an effort to curb student activism. Meanwhile, the unofficial Teachers' National Trade Union also called for a nation-wide strike of teachers.

Attacks on universities have intensified in response to the nation-wide wave of new protests called by student organisations. Marches and demonstrations across the country have been met with increasing police brutality while student dormitories and residences have also been targeted, a method to which the Islamic Republic's security forces have often resorted in times of political crisis and turmoil. In particular, at Sharif University in Tehran, police forces seized the campus and, according to witnesses, intimidated, arrested and opened fire on students and staff.

As a result of the unfolding events and as a sign of solidarity with their students, academic staff in a number of universities have resigned. Among them are professors Lily Galehadaran, from Shiraz Art University, Ammar Ashuri, from the Faculty of Art and Architecture at Tehran Azad



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University, and Nasrollah Hekmat, from Beheshti University, who reported that when handing in their resignations they were threatened by university security officers.

BRISMES's Committee on Academic Freedom wishes to reiterate its solidarity with students and staff members who are struggling in Iran for women's rights and against all forms of political repression. Universities in Iran have a fierce history of resistance against authoritarianism, before and since the 1979 revolution, and have often paid the price for their ethical commitment to a politics of justice and emancipation. We therefore underscore our solidarity with students and staff who are being subjected to police and state brutality in Iran and call on the Iranian government to reopen the university campuses and pull back its forces.

6 October 2022