



Ref : DD/ALM

21 October 2021

Sent via email:

BRISMES Committee on Academic Freedom  
British Society for Middle Eastern Studies  
71-75 Shelton Street  
Covent Garden  
London WC2H 9JQ

Dear Professor The Baroness Afshar and Professor Gordon

Thank you for your letter of 19 October to the Principal regarding the University's Protocol for Managing Speakers and Events and the decision to adopt the IHRA working definition of antisemitism. I also note the points you make about the University's invitation to Professor Somdeep Sen to speak at a research seminar on his book "Decolonising Palestine: Hamas between the Anticolonial and Postcolonial" (Cornell University Press, 2020).

As Sir Anton is on leave, he has asked me to reply on his behalf.

I would like to stress that the University takes its commitment to academic freedom and freedom of speech extremely seriously. As evidence of this, you should be aware that we have not prohibited any academic from speaking at the University at the University under this protocol, nor do we intend to prevent Dr Sen from doing so.

At the same time, you will be aware that we are required to abide by legislation relating firstly to terrorism and secondly to equality, diversity and inclusion. The protocol is intended to allow us to do this while maintaining our commitment to academic freedom and freedom of speech.

Regarding the IHRA working definition of antisemitism, as you know, this is as follows:

"Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

#### **Court Office**

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We do not believe that this definition conflates criticisms of Israel and Zionism with antisemitism. However, please also note that the University has not adopted the examples of antisemitism offered by the IHRA which do make mention of Israel and which are, arguably, more tendentious.

Please be assured that the University of Glasgow will continue to welcome speakers with diverse perspectives on Middle East studies and to foster rigorous academic research on this and other fields. I am hopeful that Professor Sen's research seminar will proceed as planned, and that it will provoke a robust academic discussion.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Duncan', written in a cursive style.

David Duncan, Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary

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