

## Presenting BRISMES 2021 Award for Services to Middle Eastern Studies to Professor Paul Starkey



I am delighted to be able to present Professor Paul Starkey with the BRISMES Award for Services to Middle Eastern Studies. I have known Paul since 2018, when I was elected to the BRISMES Council, and it has been a huge pleasure to have worked alongside him until his retirement from BRISMES last December.

Let me begin by saying something briefly about this award. It is an honorary award established by BRISMES Council in 2000. It is presented annually in recognition of those who have made a consistent contribution to Middle East studies in Britain over a period of years.

Recent winners are Deniz Kandiyoti, Paul Auchterloni and Charles Tripp. You can read a full list of winners on the BRISMES website.

Now I will say a few words about why BRISMES Council decided to award this prize to Paul Starkey. First, Paul is one of the most distinguished scholars of modern Arabic literature and his work has been foundational to the field. His many publications on Modern Arabic Literature have hugely enhanced our understanding and love of this huge field. His book, *Modern Arabic Literature*, has been a key text in degree courses across the country, if not the world. Also of note is his work on writers of the Nahda era and he has authored a number of illuminating discussions of the pioneering journalist and novelist Jurji Zaydan and his place in the emergence of historical fiction as a genre as well as producing a number of translations of this public intellectual.

In general, he is internationally recognised for his translations of Arabic novels, which have opened up the rich and dynamic field of Arabic literature to non-Arabic speaking audiences. He is known for translating ‘unknown’ or ‘controversial’ authors who, with time, have become reference points for other authors and movements. He has an unrivalled breadth of knowledge of Arabic literature and he continues to promote the field and especially its teaching and broader accessibility through his translations. He is also a warm and generous person who has been supportive of the next generation of scholars.

Second, Paul has dedicated a huge amount of time and effort to BRISMES. He is one of the longest serving members of BRISMES Council. He served as Vice President of BRISMES from 2012 to 2018 and, as outgoing Vice President, continued as a member of Council until 2020. When he stepped down from Council in December 2020, he told me that he was looking forward to not attending a BRISMES meeting for the first time in 10 years.

One of Paul's most important legacies is the BRISMES Committee on Academic Freedom, which was established in 2019. He played a central role in setting up the committee and he continues to be a very active member.

Alongside this, Paul has made an important contribution to the campaign for the late Giulio Regini. In May 2018, under Paul's vice presidency, BRISMES coorganised an international conference for Giulio with the Italian Society for Middle Eastern Studies (SeSaMO) and the Association for African Studies in Italy (ASAI). Paul was also a keynote speaker at that conference, and co-edited a book with Lorenzo Casi based on the conference. An Italian translation of his lecture on "British reactions to the Regeni case" was quoted by the President of the Italian *Joint Commission of Inquiry into the death of Giulio Regeni*.

I am sure that you will agree that Professor Paul Starkey is a most worthy recipient of the BRISMES Award for Services to Middle Eastern Studies. Please join me in congratulating him.

Many thanks to Ian Netton, Nora Parr, Lorenzo Cassini, Tony Gorman and Joseph Farag for sharing their insights and reflections concerning Paul's contributions.

*Nicola Pratt*  
*Outgoing Vice President of BRISMES*  
*On behalf of BRISMES Council*  
*1 July 2021*