



BRISMES

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies

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Minister of the Interior Aryeh Machluf Deri
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Minister of Education, Rafi Peretz
Chairman, Council for Higher Education of Israel
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Ambassador Neil Wigan OBE
UK Ambassador to Israel
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12 September 2019

Dear Prime Minister and Ministers,

I write on behalf of the British Society for Middle East Studies (BRISMES) to protest against Israeli violations of Palestinian academic freedom. Specifically, we call on the Israeli authorities to end arbitrary and unreasonable restrictions on foreign nationals working at Palestinian universities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The denial and restrictions of entry and residency visas are causing serious damage to the teaching and research functions of Palestinian universities, imperilling the right of Palestinians to education and isolating the Palestinian community from the rest of the world. In the longer term, these measures will cause severe harm to the educational and employment opportunities of the next generation of Palestinian students.

BRISMES was founded in 1973 to encourage and promote the study of the Middle East in the United Kingdom. It is the leading UK association in this field, with a global membership of academics, students, diplomats, journalists and others who deal professionally with the Middle East, including Israelis and Palestinians.

Members of our Society have for a long time observed with grave concern the many ways in which Israeli occupation and control has violated Palestinian academic freedom and degraded its

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educational infrastructure. We wrote to you about these concerns last year. We are now writing to add our voice to calls by Birzeit University (BZU), the Middle East Studies Association of North America, and other bodies to end the discriminatory policy against foreign nationals working at BZU and other Palestinian universities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

As the occupying power, Israel has a duty to maintain the functioning of Palestinian civil institutions, including Palestinian universities. We therefore call upon you to lift the restrictions preventing international academics from staying and working in the West Bank, refrain from imposing arbitrary restrictions on the duration of stay or extension of stay for international academics, and order the publication of a clear and lawful procedure for issuing entry visas and work permits for international academics in the West Bank, to enable universities to manage and maintain their academic freedom.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Nicola Pratt, Vice-President of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies
On behalf of the BRISMES Council