

BRISMES and DAVO Committees on Academic Freedom Statement on Israeli Military Attack on Birzeit University Campus

The Academic Freedom Committees of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) and the Germany Middle East Studies Association (DAVO), as bodies committed to protecting and advancing academic freedom and freedom of expression within the Middle East and in relation to the study and teaching of the Middle East, strongly condemn the Israeli military attack on Birzeit University on 6 January 2026. This violent incursion onto a university campus constitutes a serious violation of the fundamental rights and safety of students, academics, and university staff.

According to a [press release](#) from Birzeit University, as well as [reputable media reports](#), Israeli forces forcibly stormed the campus by breaking through the main gate and deploying live ammunition, stun grenades, and tear gas directly into areas where students and staff were present. During the raid, soldiers entered university buildings, disrupted academic activities, and caused widespread panic and fear within the university community.

These events unfolded during a peaceful student gathering expressing solidarity with Palestinian prisoners. The Israeli raid on this gathering resulted in at least eleven students being injured and hospitalised, with additional students suffering from injuries caused by tear gas inhalation, rubber-coated bullets, and shrapnel from explosives.

The assault on Birzeit University is not an isolated incident but part of a broader pattern of [systematic targeting](#) of Palestinian educational institutions. In recent years, students and staff across the occupied West Bank have faced intimidation, arrests, campus raids, and severe restrictions on movement. These practices undermine the right to education and constitute an attack on academic freedom, intellectual autonomy, and the ability of educational institutions to function without fear of coercion or violence.

We condemn the raid and emphasise that universities must remain protected spaces for learning, debate, critical inquiry, as well as freedom of expression. Violence against students and educators is unacceptable under any circumstances and is in contradiction with international humanitarian law and the Geneva Convention.

We call on the international academic community to:

- Condemn the Israeli military assault on Birzeit University and affirm the protected status of educational institutions under international law.
- Take meaningful steps to pressure the Government of Israel to end its systematic targeting of Palestinian universities, specifically by ending partnerships with and/or divesting from institutions and organisations that are instrumental to the commission or enablement of these attacks and Israel's illegal occupation more broadly.
- Support Birzeit University and other Palestinian universities and their students and faculty through institutional partnerships, advocacy, and solidarity actions aimed at safeguarding their right to education, academic freedom and physical safety.

BRISMES and DAVO Committees on Academic Freedom
20 January 2026