



BRISMES

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies

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BRISMES Administrative Office, Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL

The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

King Charles Street

London

SW1A 2AH

27 January 2021

Dear Foreign Secretary,

Re: GIULIO REGENI

I write on behalf of the Academic Freedom Committee of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) to express our continuing concern about the case of the murdered Cambridge student, Giulio Regeni. 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.

As you will already be aware, we are currently marking the fifth anniversary of the murder in Egypt of Giulio Regeni, a PhD student at the University of Cambridge, who was conducting research on trade unions in Cairo for his degree. Giulio was last seen alive on 25 January 2016 and his body was discovered on 3 February 2016. Despite the best efforts of the Italian authorities and others, the precise circumstances of Giulio's death have still not been established, and many questions remain unanswered regarding his abduction, torture and murder. The lack of resolution of the case has added to the profound anguish caused for Giulio's family, and the case also has implications for academic relations between the UK and Egypt, for researchers working in the Middle East, and indeed for academic freedom more generally.

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In the latest twist to the affair, the Egyptian authorities have announced that they are ‘temporarily closing’ the investigation into the case, leaving the identification of Giulio’s murderers entirely unresolved. This is despite the fact that investigations had appeared to be making substantive progress, with five members of the Egyptian security forces having been identified by the Italian authorities to stand trial for the crime.

Although the Regeni case has attracted less public attention in the UK compared with Italy, the case has been kept alive during the past five years by British academics, Amnesty International and the MP for Cambridge, among others, and a vigil was held in Cambridge on Sunday 24 January 2021 to mark the fifth anniversary of Giulio’s disappearance.

We believe that a speedy, credible and lawful resolution of the Regeni case remains as important as ever and is in the interests of all parties concerned. Therefore, we urge the UK government to use the fifth anniversary of Giulio’s murder as an opportunity to re-engage with the case and to add weight to the calls being made by others urging the Egyptian authorities to re-open their investigation.

Yours sincerely,

Professor the Baroness Afshar OBE

President, BRISMES on behalf of BRISMES Committee on Academic Freedom