

Joint statement issued in response to dismissal of NUS president Shaima Dallali

Signed by: British Palestinian Committee, Diaspora Alliance, European Legal Support Centre, Muslim Association of Britain, Palestinian Forum in Britain, Palestine Solidarity Campaign

We are dismayed to see that the NUS' investigation into their elected president, Shaima Dallali, has been allowed to [reach this conclusion](#).

The disciplinary investigation into Ms. Dallali was triggered after pressure from the Government and the Union of Jewish Students (UJS) which led to a wider investigation into antisemitism within the NUS. We, amongst a range of legal, community, student and rights organisations have raised questions about the credibility of this process as a genuine anti-racist exercise. The dismissal of Ms. Dallali, and the discrimination which we consider that she has been subjected to, only exacerbates these concerns. We understand that Ms. Dallali is considering her right to appeal the dismissal and to bring Tribunal proceedings over the NUS' treatment and dismissal of her.

We recognise the considerable political pressure put on the NUS to initiate and reach 'the right result' in these two investigatory processes. However, in bowing to this pressure, the NUS has undermined its own commitment to anti-racism, including the fight against antisemitism, and has abandoned its duty of care to its elected President. Ms. Dallali has been subjected to the most intense public scrutiny and horrifying abuse, including death threats. This is not the first time a Muslim woman of colour has had her social media trawled, her internet presence scrutinised, and her ability to do her elected role obstructed by a media-stoked outrage that ends up conflating legitimate criticisms of Israel with antisemitism. Unfortunately for Ms. Dallali, her grave concerns over her safety have been completely side-lined.

The refusal to accept Ms. Dallali's unreserved apology for one tweet from a decade ago when she was a teenager, while publicising a number of spurious allegations around her support for Palestinian rights, speaks volumes about the nature of the NUS' investigation. The fact that the decision to dismiss Ms. Dallali was leaked and published in the Jewish News and the Jewish Chronicle, and reportedly shared with the Government and the Leader of the Opposition, before she had even been notified, is wholly inappropriate and beggars belief.

From the outset of the dual investigations, we raised fundamental concerns about the framework for investigation and the failure to acknowledge how conflation of antisemitism with legitimate critique of Israeli oppression has been utilised to silence Palestinians and those who support their rights. The inclusion, for example, amongst the published allegations against Ms. Dallali, that she had tweeted 'from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free' and had participated in a protest at KCL against the presence on campus of a former Deputy Prime Minister of Israel, made clear a failure from the

outset to distinguish between genuine antisemitism and legitimate advocacy for the rights of Palestinians.

We have also raised concerns about the disproportionate involvement of the UJS, who were given significant authority in the framing of the investigation and the [appointment of the Independent Investigator](#). Whilst we recognise the need for the NUS to consult with a body representing Jewish students in addressing concerns about antisemitism, the degree of prioritisation of a single interested party violates due process.

It also fails to take into account the role the UJS has played in the conflation of antisemitism and legitimate critique of Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people, including promoting resources which suggest that it is inherently antisemitic to advocate for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel or to describe Israel as a state practising the crime of apartheid.

In this regard we note that the formal disciplinary process against Ms. Dallali was, in part, triggered by her public statements criticising Israel for its discriminatory laws and policies, and her calling out of the UJS on social media, prior to being elected president, for its evidenced activities aiming to silence advocacy for Palestinian rights. It is deeply concerning that criticism of the UJS for its overtly political pro-Israel advocacy has been reframed as evidence of hostility to all Jewish students, and thereby seen as grounds for dismissal.

Whilst we await the report into the broader investigation, Ms. Dallali's dismissal renews our deep concerns that its likely outcome, rather than combatting the very real problem of antisemitism, will instead contribute to anti-Palestinian racism and the silencing of legitimate advocacy for Palestine.

In responding to this situation in this manner, we believe the NUS has made a series of misjudgements and reached an outcome that does precisely the opposite of its purported aim. It needs to embark on the significant task facing it to repair the damage done by this investigation and rebuild trust with students who are doing crucial anti-racism work, including those advocating for Palestinian rights and working to combat Islamophobia and antisemitism.