

**אקדמיה לשוויון**  
**أكاديميون من أجل المساواة**

To:

May 6<sup>th</sup> 2022

Prof. Hartle Johan Frederik, Rector of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna

Dr Petrovic Jelena, Curator of the Spring Curatorial Program

CC: Mag. Jelena Kaludjerović, Verein K – Kunst, Kultur, Kommunikation

Karola Kraus, General Director, MUMOK

From: The Executive Board

Academia for Equality

RE: Supporting Dr. Walaa Alqaisiya and academic freedom

Esteemed colleagues,

We are writing to you as Academia for Equality, an organization of over 700 academics, holding positions of all ranks in universities and colleges in Israel and around the world. We work together to promote democratization, equality and access to higher education, and struggle against silencing of critical voices and complicity with injustices in academia.

We write with great concern in support of Dr. Walaa Alqaisiya, whose lecture “Queering Aesthetics: Unsettling the Zionist Sensual Regime” at the Spring Curatorial Program 2022 was canceled due to pressures from pro-Israel groups and egregious accusations of antisemitism. Furthermore, Dr. Alqaisiya received no notice nor explanation about the cancellation are the reasons for it - and given no chance to explain or defend herself. This behavior bears all the hallmarks of academic silencing of critical voices.

This worrisome act of censorship joins the dangerous trend of silencing Palestinian voices in European academia - a trend that has troubling implications for the fundamental rights, safety and academic freedoms of Palestinian scholars; it also deprives your students of a perspective crucial for understanding events in Palestine/Israel.

As academics well versed in the Israel-Palestine question, some of whom also study antisemitism, we strongly reject any direct or implied conflation of criticism of Israel or Zionism with antisemitism as academically invalid. As Israeli citizens who share many of the critical views expressed by Ms. Alqaisiya, we see the labelling of such views as ‘antisemitic’ as absurd.

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As an organization, Academia for Equality defends the right of academics and students to express their views without fear for their professional position or their scholarly reputation. We support the right of all academics and students to criticize Israel and its policies without fear of retribution.

We express our solidarity and support of Dr. Walaa Alqaisiya, and call on the Academy of Fine Arts and the MUMOK Museum to inform Dr. Alqaisiya of the nature of the accusations against her, to issue a public apology and to retract these heinous accusations. Finally, we urge you to enact policies that ensure that Dr. Alqaisiya and other Palestinian scholars are allowed to both study and teach in a safe environment, so that your students and the scholarly community more broadly will benefit from their scholarship.

Sincerely,

The Executive Board

Academia for Equality