

אקדמיה לשוויון
أكاديميون من أجل المساواة

Prof. Dr Robert Schlögl
President, The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation
Sent By Email: robert.schloegl@cec.mpg.de, info@avh.de

Dear Prof. Dr Robert Schlögl,

We are writing on behalf of Academia for Equality (A4E) to inquire about the unaccustomed process of selection and awarding of awards, implemented by the Humboldt Foundation, and the suspicion that basic rights of freedom of speech and expression were not kept by the award committee.

A4E is an organization of over 800 Israeli academics, Jews and Palestinians, in Israeli universities and colleges and around the world. A4E promotes democratization, equality, and access to higher education for all communities in Israel, seeking justice and equality in our society as a whole. We struggle against the complicity of Israeli academia with oppression and denial of education in the occupied Palestinian territories and stand in solidarity with scholars who are targeted for speaking up on justice for the Palestinian people. We are committed to an inclusive academia upholding both truth and justice, freedom of speech and respectful debate.

It is our understanding, shared by BRISMES, that the process of determining finalists for the Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel Research Award involved an intrusive investigation into candidates' social media and non-violent expressions of protest. The questions raised by the award committee are entirely unrelated to the assessment of Dr. Fakhreddine's work as a scholar of Arabic literature and do not appear to be in line with the publicized criteria for the Award. Rather, it would indicate that the Award committee's decisions were being informed by political considerations. Dr Fakhreddine was, in other words, subjected to additional evaluations on the basis of her extramural social media posts, shares and likes and above all on her political opinions, and not solely on the basis of her scholarly work or the application materials that were requested and submitted according to the information announced on the Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel Research Prize Award website. It is an affront to academic freedom and freedom of expression that Dr Fakhreddine's views were interrogated in this way and used by a scholarly foundation to make a decision about a research award.

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Much like the representatives of BRISMES who wrote to you, we have profound concerns about the procedure through which the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation reached its decisions to bestow ‘research awards’. This kind of surveillance and policing not only undermines academic freedom and freedom of expression but has also caused considerable distress to Dr Fakhreddine.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

A4E executive board

BRISMES letter:

<https://www.brismes.ac.uk/news/academic-freedom-letter-to-alexander-von-humboldt-foundation>
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