

**From the President and Principal**  
Professor Colin Bailey CBE,  
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Email: [principal@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:principal@qmul.ac.uk)

**Your Ref: 73674.1**

Mishcon de Reya LLP  
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8 December 2023

By email only: [james.lisbon@mishcon.com](mailto:james.lisbon@mishcon.com)

Dear Mishcon de Reya,

I write as President and Principal of Queen Mary University of London to respond to the serious issues you have raised within your letter of 30 November 2023. This letter follows the initial acknowledgment I asked the University's Chief Governance Officer to provide to you on 1 December 2023 as an immediate step in light of the urgency of the issues within your letter.

I would wish to underscore at the earliest possible stage of this response that the welfare of our students and staff is of genuine utmost priority to the University. Queen Mary is a diverse, inclusive community with 172 nationalities represented on our campuses. There is a strong ethos amongst members of our community of supporting each other through challenges that is very actively encouraged by me and other leaders within the University. There are many well-advertised routes for students and staff to access support and to report any issues or concerns.

With such an international community there are of course many students who are personally affected by the current conflict in the Middle East. In recognition of this, and in addition to reminding our students about the support we routinely provide, our Director of Student Experience initiated dedicated meetings early on with the Queen Mary Students' Union ("QMSU"), the QMSU Jewish and Israel Society and the national Union of Jewish Students, and did the same with the QMSU Friends of Palestine Society, to discuss concerns, communications and support. The meetings have been positive and constructive and led to changes to University communications and the provision of dedicated wellbeing support for members of the QMSU Jewish and Israel Society and the QMSU Friends of Palestine Society. We also issued a statement acknowledging the impact of the conflict on members of our community and asking students and staff to come together with compassion and understanding and support each other. You can find our statement here:

<https://my.qmul.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/items/statement-on-the-conflict-in-the-middle-east.html>

I was deeply concerned by the issues which you have raised given that they represent, on their face, matters of substantial gravity. In the first instance, we have therefore taken four particular immediate actions to investigate the issues you have raised, which I will summarise below.

**1. We have reviewed carefully reports made to the University directly of the alleged issues referred to within your letter.**

We have reviewed carefully all the issues brought to our attention through Report and Support and in messages sent directly to me, our Director of Student Experience and the campus security service. We found two specific reports that were addressed at the time and are referred to in detail below. Two other reports did not contain enough information for us to be able to take forward an investigation at the time and the individuals who submitted the reports did not respond when we contacted them to ask for more information. Apart from these specific cases our immediate inquiries suggest that the University has not received, whether on a named or anonymous basis, through its formal reporting structures any direct reports of the incidents which are alleged to have occurred in your letter. We will continue to gather as much information as we can in relation to the issues referred to within your letter, which include issues that we would expect to consider under our Code of Student Discipline. It is taking us some time to establish the facts of these incidents from the limited information provided and repeat the request we made to you last week to share the facts of the incidents described as soon as possible in order that we can take appropriate action without delay.

The two specific issues described within your letter of 30 November 2023 that have previously been addressed by the University are as follows.

a) A demonstration occurred on 23 November 2023 on the Mile End Campus at which a few students began to chant 'from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free'. When the student demonstrators started chanting the term repeatedly, a trained member of staff who was observing the demonstration intervened by asking the demonstrators to consider the impact of this on other members of the University community. While I note that your letter claims that the negative response to our intervention from demonstrators and onlookers created a hostile environment for Jewish students, we maintain that we had been observing the event and our intervention was the right thing to do in balancing all our legal duties.

b) The University was contacted on 28 November 2023 by the QMSU Jewish and Israel Society about an event to be hosted later that day by the QMSU Islamic Society at which Moazzam Begg was invited to speak. We reviewed QMSU's decision to approve the event and reached the same conclusion, although we also asked for the event to be observed and recorded to assure ourselves that it would remain within the agreed scope. We wrote to the QMSU Jewish and Israel Society to explain the process we had followed and why, having reviewed a recording of the event, we remain confident that there was no legal basis to exclude Moazzam Begg from speaking on campus.

**2. We have taken further steps to urge all students to report to the University any issues of concern so that we can take appropriate action to respond in properly informed terms.**

Any suggestion that students feel unable or restricted in reporting concerns is also a matter of real and substantial concern to the University. We have urged members of our community to report to us any issues that they would wish us to be aware of, highlighting that, in addition to using Report and Support on a named or anonymous basis, they can also write to their School, Institute or Faculty or to me directly.

**3. We have engaged with key stakeholder groups and will continue to do so.**

Following the receipt of your letter dated 30 November 2023, our Director of Student Experience has issued an invitation to QMSU's Jewish and Israel Society with the intended purpose of understanding what steps would help to address the serious concerns that have been raised. A preliminary invitation to meet on 5 December 2023 has been re-arranged at the request of members of the society and I am informed a meeting is taking place today. We are continuing to engage with all of our community in order to obtain a fuller understanding of the matters raised within your letter.

**4. We are working collaboratively with Queen Mary Students' Union**

Additionally, we will continue to work with QMSU in the coming days to establish whether any of the incidents described in the letter were reported and considered through its structures. As you implicitly observe in your letter of 30 November 2023, QMSU is a separate legal entity, but it is open to any Queen Mary student to raise a concern with the University if they are dissatisfied with the way in which QMSU has handled a complaint. We are engaging with QMSU to understand in further detail how it has responded to the matters raised in your letter.

As a feature of the dynamic environment upon which our community is proudly built, we are always seeking to evolve and strengthen relations. I have summarised above some of the various ways in which the University has been working with its community during the current crisis and how we have responded immediately to the issues raised within your letter dated 30 November 2023. However, the University's position is that fostering of good relations amongst all members of our community in what are increasingly turbulent political times is inherently an ongoing process, and we invite our Jewish and Israeli students, in common with others, to continue to engage with and alongside us in addressing any issues of concern.

While the University has confidence in the robustness of its systems and urges students to avail themselves of them, we appreciate that a layered approach to communications may be appropriate to ensure that all voices are heard as we seek to balance the needs and interests of all members of our community. Accordingly, should individual students wish to report specific concerns through your firm, the University will of course engage in that form of dialogue, provided of course that the student(s) provide authority for us to discuss specifics of their individual cases with you.

Noting the conclusion of your letter dated 30 November 2023, the University reiterates in the strongest possible terms its desire to ensure that Jewish and Israeli students feel that they have a safe space within our community that they, in common with all members of our community, should naturally have confidence in.

Yours faithfully,



Professor Colin Bailey CBE  
President and Principal  
Queen Mary University of London