# University of St Andrews rector reinstated after successful appeal over Gaza statement



In a notable development at the University of St Andrews, the rector, Ms Maris, has successfully appealed a decision related to a controversial statement she made regarding the ongoing conflict in Gaza. In a message addressed to the student body of approximately 10,000, she denounced Israel's actions in Gaza as "genocidal," labelling them within a broader context of "apartheid, siege, illegal occupation and collective punishment." Her remarks also condemned actions by Hamas, including hostage-taking and targeting of civilians, while advocating for a ceasefire.

Following the issuance of her statements, the university initiated an investigation. The report, prepared by Morag Ross QC, acknowledged that while Ms Maris exhibited "poor judgement," it did not find that dismissal was an appropriate response. The report stated, “In my view, if the Court is satisfied that there is a breach, dismissal would be a disproportionate response.” It further emphasised that the division within the university community was not solely due to Ms Maris's statements and cited potential infringements on her rights to free expression.

The investigation concluded that dismissal would unjustifiably interfere with her rights, leaving any decision regarding sanctions to be determined by the court. In light of the favourable appeal ruling by Menzies Campbell, Chancellor of the University of St Andrews, Ms Maris will now return to her full responsibilities as rector, including her position as head of the university's court.

Speaking to The Courier, Ms Maris expressed her belief that the decision represents not only a vindication of her stance but also a crucial defence of free speech principles within academic institutions. She stated, “Universities must remain places where individuals are free to speak out against injustice, especially where that speech is grounded in humanitarian concern,” pledging to continue her campaign for political expression and academic freedom.

The broader context of the conflict has drawn international scrutiny, with organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch accusing Israel of genocide. Additionally, South Africa has presented a case to the International Court of Justice based on these allegations, though a ruling is anticipated to take several years. Meanwhile, the International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Minister of Defence Yoav Gallant, citing accusations of crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The University of St Andrews has been approached for comment regarding the situation and implications of the appeal.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cye0rj48kg5o> - This article reports on the University of St Andrews' decision to remove Rector Stella Maris from her role on the university court following her comments about the Israel-Gaza conflict, highlighting the university's stance on her statements.
2. <https://www.thenational.scot/news/24494721.scottish-uni-rector-says-institution-betrayed-students/> - This piece features an interview with Stella Maris, where she expresses her belief that the university's actions represent a betrayal of students and a threat to free speech, providing insight into her perspective on the situation.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/article/2024/aug/01/st-andrews-university-rector-discharged-governing-body-israel-genocide-accusation> - The Guardian discusses the University Court's decision to discharge Stella Maris from her governing roles, citing her refusal to accept the findings of an independent investigation into her comments on the Gaza conflict.
4. <https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/st-andrews-rector-dismissed-governing-body-after-speaking-out-about-gaza> - This article covers the dismissal of Stella Maris from the University Court after her statements on Gaza, including her intention to appeal the decision and her views on freedom of speech in higher education.
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/gaza-israel-st-andrews-jewish-university-b1174235.html> - The Standard reports on the University Court's decision to remove Stella Maris from her role as president and trustee, highlighting her response and the university's justification for the action.
6. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/st-andrews-rector-stripped-roles-over-gaza-comments> - This article details the investigation into Stella Maris's comments on Gaza, the university's decision to strip her of certain roles, and her response to the findings and subsequent actions.
7. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25131585.stella-maris-wins-appeal-st-andrews-university-gaza-row/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data