# University of St Andrews rector wins appeal over Gaza statement controversy



In a significant development at the University of St Andrews, Ms Maris, the rector, has successfully appealed a decision related to a controversial statement she made regarding the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In her message to the university's 10,000 students, Ms Maris described Israel's actions in Gaza as "genocidal" and accused the state of "apartheid, siege, illegal occupation and collective punishment." Her remarks also included condemnation of actions taken by Hamas, characterising them as "war crimes" due to the hostage-taking and targeting of civilians, while she called for a ceasefire in the ongoing violence.

The university subsequently launched an investigation into Ms Maris’s comments. Despite acknowledging that she exhibited "poor judgement" and that her social media posts further inflamed tensions, the report concluded that dismissal was not an appropriate sanction. Commissioned by the university and prepared by Morag Ross QC, the investigation determined that the expression of her views constituted a single issue that included a disclaimer and did not fully contribute to the division within the university. The report stated, "If the Court is satisfied that there is a breach, dismissal would be a disproportionate response."

Following the investigation, Ms Maris appealed against the university's findings. According to The Courier, her appeal has been successful, with Menzies Campbell, chancellor of the University of St Andrews, ruling in her favour. As a result, Ms Maris is set to resume her full responsibilities as rector, including her role as head of the university’s court.

In response to the ruling, Ms Maris stated, “This decision is not only a vindication of my position but a defence of the fundamental principles of free expression within our universities.” She emphasised the need for universities to be environments where individuals can freely discuss injustices, particularly when such discourse is rooted in humanitarian concerns. She also expressed her commitment to continue advocating for political expression and academic freedom within the university setting.

The broader context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains contentious, with human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch alleging genocide in relation to the situation in Gaza. Additionally, South Africa has initiated a case at the International Court of Justice based on these allegations, although any ruling is not anticipated for several years. Furthermore, the International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Minister of Defence Yoav Gallant concerning alleged crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The university has not provided further comments on the matter at the time of reporting, as discussions surrounding the balance between free expression and the emotional responses to such politically charged topics continue.

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

## References

* <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-67529665> - This article reports on the University of St Andrews rector, Ms. Maris, being urged to apologize or resign after accusing Israel of 'genocide' in Gaza, highlighting the controversy surrounding her statements.
* <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/11/24/st-andrews-university-rector-israel-genocide-palestine/> - This piece discusses the backlash against Ms. Maris for her 'genocide' claim, including calls for her resignation and the university's response to the controversy.
* <https://www.thenational.scot/news/23947969.st-andrews-row-university-rectors-israel-comments/> - This article details the dispute at the University of St Andrews over Rector Maris's comments on Israel, including the university's leadership expressing dismay over her statements.
* <https://www.scotsman.com/news/people/st-andrews-university-utterly-dismayed-over-new-rectors-israel-genocide-claim-as-students-demand-apology-4423536> - This report covers the University of St Andrews expressing dismay over Rector Maris's 'genocide' claim and the subsequent demands for an apology from students.
* <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/amnesty-report-says-israel-has-committed-genocide-against-palestinians-gaza-2024-12-05/> - This article discusses Amnesty International's report accusing Israel of committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, supporting the claims made by Ms. Maris.
* <https://www.ft.com/content/b6372031-2bdd-4182-8666-388e7a87906e> - This report by Human Rights Watch accuses Israeli authorities of intentionally depriving Palestinian civilians in Gaza of water, constituting 'acts of genocide,' aligning with the allegations mentioned in the article.
* <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