

EGRG statement in response to the Al-Jazeera I-Unit podcasts

The Economic Geography Research Group (EGRG) committee would like to reiterate and reinforce the recent statement by our colleagues on the Political Geography Research Group committee, in response to the Al-Jazeera I-Unit podcasts released in October and November 2021. We too express our support to all those affected by the perpetrators identified in the podcasts, and more widely to all who have been affected, and continue to be affected, by sexual harassment, abuses of power, and coercive behaviours in our academic communities.

As a committee, we are committed to working to make economic geography, and geography as a broader discipline, welcoming, diverse, inclusive and safe.

Over the last three years, we have worked on issues of diversity and inclusion as a priority, reflecting the grounding of economic geography as an emancipatory social science that seeks to explain and redress persistent inequalities. Yet, there is much work still to be done, and we recognise that those who experience discrimination around gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality and class, along with those in the early stages of their academic careers or with precarious contracts, are most likely to be impacted by abuses of power. As a committee, we seek to better understand and subsequently address the unequal structures of power that underpin and facilitate these abusive actions. We also recognise that such structures have, and continue to affect, economic geography as a sub-discipline.

It is vital that these types of abuses are stopped. They have no place within the academic community.

The EGRG committee will undertake a number of steps in our work towards this aim, as follows:

1. We will use our position and voice as the UK-based research group of the Economic Geography sub-discipline to raise awareness of what constitutes coercive, controlling and abusive behaviours, to insist that such behaviours have no place in the sub-discipline and reduce the level of tolerance of these behaviours. We will do so in such a way as to reach a wide audience, and in outlets that will reach those who have power within sub-disciplinary and disciplinary structures.
2. We will work with the RGS-IBG, the committees of the other RGS-IBG research groups, and other relevant institutions and partners, to develop a collective stance and voice on these issues; to share good practice; to further develop and strengthen codes of conduct and ensure adherence to these; and to identify further actions that may be taken.
3. We will develop a dedicated area of the EGRG website in which we will provide clear definitions of what counts as coercive, controlling and abusive behaviour, as well as signposting avenues for support.
4. We will hold an event in 2022 which, building on our previous diversity and inclusion events, will specifically focus on issues of power, coercion, abuse and harassment.

We seek to better understand the mechanisms through which power is abused, and to put in place strategies by which they can be addressed.

5. This and other events and workshops run by the EGRG will align with the RGS-IBG code of conduct and there will be a zero-tolerance policy relating to harassment, abuse, and other forms of unacceptable behaviour.
6. The research group will allocate money from its budget to allow committee members, and members of the wider EGRG community who would not otherwise be able to do so, to undertake bystander, allyship and other relevant training which will help them to identify unacceptable behaviours and support those affected by such behaviours.

Links to further information, support and guidance will be forthcoming on a dedicated page on the EGRG website: <https://egr.org/>

The EGRG Committee
24th January 2022