



Renowned scholar Prof. Stefan Sperl named as first Academic Director of the Cambridge Centre for Palestine studies, Cambridge, England, UK



The renowned scholar Prof. Stefan Sperl has been named as the first Academic Director of the Cambridge Centre for Palestine Studies (CCPS), Cambridge, England, UK. Stefan Sperl graduated from Oxford (BA Arabic), the American University in Cairo, and The School of Oriental and African Studies SOAS (PhD 1977).

After spending ten years working for UNHCR in Egypt, Sudan and Geneva he joined SOAS in 1988 where he taught courses in Arabic literature and Refugee Studies. In his capacity as Head of the Near and Middle East Department, he arranged for SOAS BA Arabic students to spend their year abroad at Al-Najah University in Nablus, Occupied West Bank. He retired in 2018 as Emeritus Professor of Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies and continues to be engaged in lecturing and research. From 2023 to 2025 Prof. Sperl taught courses on classical Arabic Literature at the University of Cambridge. Prof. Sperl's publications include articles on Arabic, Islamic and Refugee Studies, as well as *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry: A Structural Analysis of Selected Texts* (1989), *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Africa and Asia* (with C. Shackle, 1996), 'Stabat Mater: Reflections on a Theme in German-Jewish and Palestinian Arab Poetry' (*Comparative Criticism*, 2000), and *The Cosmic Script: Sacred Geometry and the Science of Arabic Penmanship* (with A. Moustafa, 2014) which won the Iran Book of the Year Award (2016). The eminent scholar's recent publications are: 'The Qur'an and Arabic Poetry' (*The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, 2020), the volume *Faces of the Infinite, Neoplatonism and Poetry at the Confluence of Africa, Asia and Europe* with the accompanying website www.lyrics-of-ascent.net (with Y. Dedes, 2022), 'Islamic Spirituality and the Visual Arts' (*The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Islamic Spirituality*, 2023), and 'Arabic Poetry and Neoplatonic Poetics' (*Journal of Arabic Literature*, 2025). Over the past four decades, Prof. Sperl participated in numerous international conferences and presented papers on Arabic and Comparative literature as well as Refugee and Palestine Studies. He will take on an expanded role in the Centre's academic development and strategic planning.