

Academic Freedom Committee Statement on the 2016 TB Davie Memorial Lecture

The TB Davie Memorial lecture at UCT is a flagship event that celebrates academic freedom and freedom of speech through highlighting the work and thought of those who defend these freedoms.

The Academic Freedom Committee (AFC) had, in March 2015, invited Flemming Rose, previously cultural editor of *Jyllands Posten*, to deliver the 2016 TB Davie Lecture. At that time, religious tolerance and the threats to education, free thought and free speech, and issues pertaining to visual representation, were prominent in our deliberations. Mr Rose was chosen as an eminently qualified candidate to speak on those matters.

Some members of the UCT community took a different view, and insisted that the AFC should rescind its invitation to Mr Rose on the grounds that he is a controversial speaker who could provoke protest and even violence.

Academic freedom is severely compromised when security and other pragmatic considerations preclude inviting speakers who – while controversial – in no way violate our Constitutional limitations on free speech. In light of the expected protest against Mr Rose's appearance, we had also planned, in consultation with Mr Rose, a panel discussion between him and his critics in order that disagreements related to tolerance and freedom of expression could be aired.

The AFC thus refused to rescind the invitation. We have subsequently been instructed by the Vice Chancellor, Dr Max Price, on behalf of the university Executive, that we will not be permitted to bring Mr Rose onto the campus. There will thus be no TB Davie Academic Freedom Memorial Lecture in 2016. The book which bears the name of each TB Davie speaker since 1959 will carry an appropriate entry for 2016 reflecting this development.

We regret the Executive's decision and what it reveals about the limited scope of academic freedom at UCT. Ours should be a campus on which people are free to express and contest ideas, even unpopular ones.