

18 November 2024

Professor Koen Lamberts
Vice-Chancellor
The University of Sheffield

Dear Professor Lamberts,

As part of UCU's work to assist our academic colleagues in Gaza, we recently supported a UK speaking tour entitled *Campus Voices for Palestine - Solidarity against Scholasticide*. The tour was an opportunity for staff and students to hear directly from Palestinian academics, including representatives from the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza, and learn how we can best support Palestinian staff, students and universities during the current emergency. The speaking tour involved public meetings at nine universities (Nottingham, Leeds, Newcastle, Glasgow, Edinburgh, UCL, Manchester, Sheffield Hallam and King's College).

Unfortunately, the only UK university where it was not possible to host a public meeting was at the University of Sheffield. Due to additional "security" requirements imposed by the University of Sheffield, the local organisers decided to move the meeting to Sheffield Hallam University. We echo the view of Sheffield University UCU that the requirements imposed by the University regarding this meeting were ["disproportionate, unnecessary, and lie in contradiction with University policy"](#).

The restrictions imposed on the Campus Voices for Palestine meeting follow on from the University's decision to cancel a [planned teach-in entitled "What Is Happening in Gaza?", scheduled for 1 October](#). The reasons cited for this decision include the "controversial" nature of the event and a new "events safety guidance" policy introduced earlier this year.

UCU is concerned that academic events involving Palestine and the UCU branch are being targeted in this way. We call on the university management to meaningfully engage with the branch, both in relation to the Freedom of Speech/Academic Freedom Policy, and the ways in which the new 'Events safety guidance' policy is being applied. We also urge the University to reaffirm its commitment to the principles of academic freedom and ensure that discussions on complex and politically sensitive topics, such as Israel and Palestine, are not subject to undue censorship or unnecessary restrictions.

I look forward to hearing from you on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' followed by the name 'Grady' in a cursive script.

Dr Jo Grady

General Secretary