

Professor Stephen Toope
Vice-Chancellor
The Old Schools
Trinity Lane
Cambridge CB2 1TN

Educationwashing

Dear Professor Toope,

ImpACT International for Human Rights Policies are concerned that the University of Cambridge will renew its currently on hold plans to form closer links with the government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). We respectfully request that the University of Cambridge rules out any deal with the UAE until such time as the emirate conforms to acceptable international human rights norms and implements our recommendations.

There is a danger that the University of Cambridge would invent a whole new way in which regimes can deflect and distract from their poor human rights record. This can be labelled 'Educationwashing', specifically this would in practice mean using education to obscure unethical interests and human rights problems.

As Cambridge reconsiders past links that may be inappropriate it is unfortunate that the University appears to be willing to engage with regimes with dubious human rights records. The links the University of Cambridge are trying to forge with the UAE could easily become chains for the people in that country. The UAE and Cambridge must not become complicit in educationwashing. It would be absurd and perilous for the partnership to proceed. A British academic institution that claims high principles cannot put mammon above its morals.

Furthermore, the high superb academic standards that the University of Cambridge embodies can only be protected and enhanced if students, graduates, and staff, have the right not to be censored, nor subject to state surveillance and human rights abuses. They must also be free from political and religious persecution before and after their graduation. Education and research can only reach its full potential and be effective and productive if it is impartial, free from censorship, and state intrusion. Individuals must be free from persecution and able to think and talk without fear. Only in that environment can people excel.

The university must also build upon its existing protocols and principles by which potential partnerships are evaluated. And pay heed to issues other than those which directly relate to the University's business interests. Those that must endure human rights abuses do not feature in Cambridge's concerns, what is more their plight will only be worsened by educationwashing.

Please reassure us that Cambridge's economic interests are being put ahead of ethical considerations. Considering the potential reputational damage that it could do to British higher education, whilst rewarding an iniquitous regime, the university should adopt more substantial recommendations that will prevent this and other unfortunate scenarios from emerging in the future. Freedom should not be a for a select few that are lucky enough to be associated with the University of Cambridge.

Continued.

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Citizens in a state in which the University of Cambridge is negotiating a partnership, as well as students, graduates, and staff, must have the right not to be censored. They must also be free from spyware software and other mechanisms that are used to monitor and police the political opinions of UAE residents. The University of Cambridge must demand that any state or territory in which they operate, or are seeking investment from, should immediately cease use of surveillance against political dissidents, allow for freedom of speech, enshrine legal protections that guarantee press freedom, and commit to a process of human rights reforms and democratisation. Ethical education needs to be the new maxim for British education abroad as well as at home.

I look forward to hearing from you and remain at your service.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Oulds".

Robert Oulds, MA, FRSA
Executive Director

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A small blue icon of an envelope.

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A small blue icon of a globe.

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