

Demonstration for Academic Freedom at the University of Nottingham against the Deportation of Hich Yezza.

Trasncript of Address by Alan Simpson MP for Nottingham South.
Wednesday, 28th May 2008.

*Academic staff from the University of Nottingham held a public reading from an Al-Qaeda training manual, outside the Hallward Library, University Park Campus. The demonstration expressed the outrage amongst staff and students after two innocent members of the academic community were arrested under 'terror' legislation. The document downloaded from an official US government website, appeared on a reading list in the Department of Politics and was being used for legitimate research purposes. Strong concerns were voiced over academic freedom at the university, in addition to a focus of support and solidarity with one of the arrested, Hicham Yezza. Hicham is an employee within the School of Modern Languages. Hicham was re-arrested on immigration grounds and was put on the fast-track deportation process, this was legally contested and Hicham will now be heard at a trial in July. Around 500 staff and students gathered in front of the library to hear the readings of the alleged 'radical material' that led to the arrests of student Rizwann Sabir and Hicham. The crowd was then adressed by Alan Simpson MP, video of this address is available at:
http://www.frictiontv.com/ftv_debate.php%5C?debate_id=3206*

“Every day, every week, in my constituency caseload I deal with immigration issues. These are issues that are very similar to the ones that Hich is dealing with. Often arising out of bureaucratic incompetence, often arising out of confusion and error. But they never result in the peremptory snatching of a person and the shifting of them around the country in order to justify the quite improper removal of a person. And I will say to you this: the basis of that removal is to try to justify the abuse of power under the Terrorism Act.

It is not to say that there was ever a case to be made against him. In the 13 years that he has been here, I invite the Intelligence Services or the Home Office to say to me, or to say to Parliament, this is the evidence that would connect him to terrorist activities, because I believe that there is none. If there had been, someone has to explain to Parliament, how come it has taken 13 years to get around to finding anything, and what is the basis for taking action. And how come now the action to press for deportation is to be done without access to a proper trial and the rights to defend and the right to representation.

If we allow this to be done in our name, in our silent collusion, we become the architects of our own totalitarianism. We live in fear of speaking openly, we live in fear of enquiring and researching openly. We live in fear of getting access to these documents on www.amazon.com, which is there for everyone. But we live in fear of the quiet unannounced knock on the door. And we live in fear of our own shallowness, in terms of the willingness to stand side-by-side with each other in order to defend the very basis of an open democracy that we claim that terrorism is a threat to.

I do not know whether this rain is intended to wash the hands of the University, but the closest parallel that I have come to in this was that at one stage I was also doing research into racism in Europe and I was at that point in time involved in research at the European Commission and the European Parliament. And every now and again the authorities in Brussels announced that there was going to be a crackdown on illegal immigrants and illegal workers. And the response of the European Commission was to sack all of those that they employed as cleaners for a month in the hope that they would not get caught. They did not ask whether people were illegal or not, they just wanted to wash their hands of them.

And that is what it feels the university has been doing here. If Hich had been white, if he had been blond, he would not now be standing alone without the support of the university.

I have already written to the Home Office Minister saying that this is a disgraceful way in which the Government has been allowed to act and that he should intervene personally. I think that it is important that the University be challenged to come out and defend its own staff in the same way, and I think that it is important to say that whilst I welcome your own campaigns to defend the rights of academic freedom it is important that you and we also widen this so that we understand it, that it is a campaign to defend the very basis of a free and open society, in which I want to live in, I want you to live in and I want my children to have the rights to grow up into.

If we understand that and if we hold our ground nothing can beat this campaign because it is a campaign based on truth and not prejudice, it is based on justice within the law not the justice of a kangaroo court. And if anyone has to be the defenders of that, and it is us, well, society would be the richer for us." *End.*