

Calgary university cancels event by ex- Muslim, citing sensitivity after New Zealand attacks

Podcaster and author Armin Navabi had been scheduled to give a talk entitled 'The Case Against Islamic Reform'

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<https://thestarphoenix.com/news/canada/calgary-university-cancels-event-by-ex-muslim-citing-sensitivity-after-new-zealand-attacks/wcm/17f87bc5-c50d-4b85-849c-faa3a315a8ce>



Armin Navabi ATHEIST REPUBLIC

Citing the recent anti-Muslim attacks in New Zealand, a Calgary university suddenly cancelled an event by Armin Navabi, an Iranian-Canadian atheist activist who was scheduled to deliver a talk critical of Islam.

“I’ve been deplatformed again,” wrote Navabi in a Wednesday tweet.

The event, scheduled for Thursday afternoon, was entitled The Case Against Islamic Reform. Hosted as part of a speaker series organized by the Atheist Society of Calgary, it was to be held at Mount Royal University.

Only two days before the talk, however, a representative from the school informed the society that they were being denied space.

“In light of the shooting last week and the responses to the event we have received from students and staff, we are going to have to cancel hosting your event with Armin on campus on Thursday,” reads an email from the school’s interfaith coordinator since posted to social media.

The Atheist Society of Calgary has since said the cancellation was akin to acceding to the wishes of the New Zealand gunman.

“(Atheist Society of Calgary) feels that to cancel this event communicates to terrorists, in general, that these tactics will accomplish their objectives,” they wrote in an online post [notifying attendees of the cancellation](#).

Mount Royal University justified the cancellation by saying that the Friday murder of 50 Muslims in two Christchurch, New Zealand, mosques “has had a large impact on many members in our community.”

“We made this decision in light of that impact and we would absolutely have the speaker come to our campus at another time,” they wrote [in a statement](#) sent to CBC Calgary. Navabi is the founder of Atheist Republic, an online news and information site designed to provide support to “non-believers around the world.” He is also a co-host of the podcast Secular Jihadists along with fellow Canadian ex-Muslim Ali Rizvi and is the author of the 2014 book *Why There Is No God*.

Born in Iran after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Navabi grew up deeply ingrained in the Islamic faith. He has said his path away from religion started at age 12, when he jumped out a window in the belief that if he died as a child he would be guaranteed access to heaven.

As a speaker and activist, he supports the abandonment of all religion, Islam included, and has criticized attempts to reform the faith from the inside. “The only way to reform Islam is to abandon Islam,” he wrote in a 2017 tweet.



[Armin Navabi](#)@ArminNavabi

The only way to reform Islam is to abandon Islam.

893

[3:48 PM - Jun 3, 2017](#)

[Twitter Ads info and privacy](#)

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This is the second time in a month that Navabi has been involved in a controversy about on-campus free speech.

He was recently the subject of a feature article in *Cherwell*, a weekly student paper published by students of Oxford University. However, the article was withheld from online publication on the grounds that Navabi’s comments about atheism and against Islam “might be considered offensive.”

The paper's features editor, Freddie Hayward, resigned in protest, and in an op-ed for the New Statesman warned that an "illiberal tide is sweeping British universities."



[@ArminNavabi](https://twitter.com/ArminNavabi)

It was brilliant to speak to [@freddiejh8](https://twitter.com/freddiejh8) for [@Cherwell_Online](https://twitter.com/Cherwell_Online), Oxford University's oldest



newspaper. We spoke about atheism, the regressive left, and freedom of speech. Here's what he wrote.

71

[8:42 PM - Feb 15, 2019](#)

17 people are talking about this

“What counts as an acceptable view seems to have narrowed to such an extent that even liberal views, based in fact, are deemed too offensive to be published,” he wrote.

Navabi will still be speaking in Calgary, but not on property owned by Mount Royal University. His talk was quickly moved to cSPACE, a South Calgary arts hub.