



Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship

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president@safs.ca

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fiamengo@uottawa.ca

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andrew.irvine@ubc.ca

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lupker@uwo.ca

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seligman@uwo.ca

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psuedfeld@psych.ubc.ca

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28 September 2020

Edward Iacobucci
Dean and James M. Tory Professor of Law
Jackman Law Building
78 Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario M5S 2C5

Dear Dean Iacobucci,

I am writing as president of the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship (SAFS), an organization of university faculty members and others dedicated to the defense of academic freedom and the merit principle in higher education. (For further information, see our website at www.safs.ca.)

SAFS is concerned that allegations regarding the University of Toronto's attempt to hire a director for the International Human Rights Program have remained unanswered.

One allegation is that Valentina Azarova was led to believe by officers in the Faculty of Law that she would be offered the directorship. Indeed, some scholars associated with the law school contend that Dr Azarova had been offered the position only to have the offer revoked.

Was an offer made, either informally or formally, and then withdrawn?

Dr Azarova was the search committee's choice for the directorship. Why has the search committee's recommendation been rejected? A second allegation is that officers at the law school were opposed to hiring Dr Azarova either because they were uneasy with her criticisms of Israel's treatment of Palestinians or because they feared that hiring her would damage relations with a generous donor.

As you appreciate, scholars must be free to investigate and comment on political and social affairs as they will, without thereby jeopardizing their careers. If scholars come to believe that making public their views regarding the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians could prevent them from assuming leadership roles at the University of Toronto, they might choose to keep their opinions to themselves, to the detriment of both scholarly inquiry and public understanding. As well, universities must hold themselves only to academic standards, even at the risk of alienating benefactors, if they are to pursue their mission.

Your statements on these matters to date, as reported in the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail*, have not clarified just what happened and why.

We respectfully ask you to respond to our letter. With your permission, we will post your response along with this letter on our website.

Sincerely,



Mark Mercer, PhD
President, Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship (SAFS)
6593, rue Jeanne-Mance
Montreal (Qc) H2V 4L1
president@safs.ca
<http://www.safs.ca/>

Professor, Department of Philosophy
Saint Mary's University
923 Robie Street
Halifax, NS B3H 3C3
mark.mercer@smu.ca
<http://professormarkmercerc.ca/>
<http://www.smu.ca/academics/departments/philosophy-faculty-and-staff.html>

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