



Reflect Care Heal

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**The Vice Chancellor
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Dear Professor

LETTER OF SUPPORT: SUPPORT FOR PROFESSOR MAHDI'S RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

We are concerned by the recent disparaging remarks and accusations made against Dean of Health Sciences' Professor Shabir Mahdi by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), which has attempted to pressure Professor Mahdi into silence about the ongoing genocide against the Palestinians. Such external intimidation undermines academic freedom and open dialogue, essential to any university's mission and the pursuit of truth in all academic disciplines. The weaponisation of the term antisemitic by Zionists, combined with lawfare, are a well-worn strategy to silence critics of Zionism and Israel, and must be dismissed with the contempt it deserves.

Any university must remain a space where academics can express diverse views, particularly on pressing humanitarian issues. We therefore urge the university leadership to reaffirm its commitment to freedom of expression and to protect Professor Mahdi from any actions intended to restrict his ability to speak freely on these matters.

We have no doubt that financial leverage and the threat of stopping donations and bequeaths etc. to the university will also be brought to bear upon the university to curb criticism, protest and any mass action in support of the freedom struggle of the Palestinians, but we are confident that the history and legacy of Wits will prevail and that leadership of Wits will not succumb to such tactics.

We stand in solidarity with Professor Mahdi and with all those advocating for the protection of healthcare workers in conflict zones, including Palestinian healthcare providers who continue to operate under conditions of extreme adversity.

We trust that the university will uphold its values of academic freedom and resist any efforts to suppress the right of its faculty to voice important humanitarian concerns.

Sincerely

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

ISLAMIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

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