

University professor cleared of accusations of Islamophobia reveals fear of being attacked or killed

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A university professor cleared of accusations of Islamophobia has revealed his fear of being attacked or killed by Muslim extremists – and slammed ‘woke’ students for putting the lives of academics at risk. Human rights scholar Steven Greer said he was forced to wear a disguise and carry a weapon for his own protection after undergraduates at Bristol University Law School complained that elements of his course were racist and discriminatory.

A teaching slide that mentioned the 2015 terror attack on the Paris offices of Charlie Hebdo, a magazine that had published cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed, was described as “Islamophobic rhetoric”. And a lecture which included “well-attested observations” about the inferior treatment of women and non-Muslims in Islamic states, and the tough penalties handed out under sharia law, was said to be “bigoted and divisive”.

Professor Greer, a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and of the Royal Society of Arts, and Research Director at the Oxford Institute for British Islam, a think tank and research academy that seeks to promote a progressive interpretation of Islam, was fully exonerated of all wrongdoing last year. A five-month inquiry, led by a senior academic at Bristol University, found each of the accusations to be baseless.

But the “scurrilous falsehoods by a handful of illiberal students” still led to the removal of the material from the

course and left him fearing for his reputation and his life.

Professor Greer, who was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, said he was more afraid than he had ever been growing up during the Troubles. The terrifying ordeal reflects what he describes as a growing assault on academic freedom within British universities. He says fellow scholars in the fields of the arts, humanities and social sciences are already self-censoring and “dumbing down” their courses for fear of being falsely branded as “hostile to minorities including gays, transsexuals and Muslims” by “woke student campaigners”. But the ease with which allegations involving racism and religion can be levelled by students are placing academics at real risk of reputational and physical attack “based on nothing but lies and distortion”,

Falsely Accused of Islamophobia

My Struggle Against
Academic Cancellation



Steven Greer

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His memoir, *Falsely Accused of Islamophobia: My Struggle Against Academic Cancellation*, which recounts his ordeal and his concerns about cancel culture in academia, hits the shelves today.

Professor Greer, 66, a leading authorities on human rights, particularly with respect to counter-terrorism legislation, said: "I had until last year enjoyed a wonderful career and I believe I had earned the respect of students, colleagues and peers all over the world. Almost overnight, however, my name became synonymous with bigotry, racism and Islamophobia – especially on social media – because of a handful of malicious students who set out to ruin my life. I was vilified, and my name and reputation were dragged through the mud. For my own safety I was forced to act like a fugitive – simply for including academically authoritative, fact-based information in my course that a few militant students took objection to.

My case is not the first of this kind and nor, sadly, is it likely to be the last. Cancel culture is fast becoming the scourge of academia and, in my opinion, it threatens to dumb down degree courses at many of the UK's finest institutions..."

The allegations against the professor were first levelled in October 2020 when Bristol University's Islamic Society (BRISOC) made a formal complaint to the University of Bristol alleging multiple counts of Islamophobia in his teaching and other public output. He was primarily accused of expressing "bigoted views" in the Islam, China, and the Far East module of the Human Rights in Law, Politics and Society (HRLPS) course which he had designed and taught since 2006. The module, repeatedly praised by external examiners for its "rigorous and critical" examination of contemporary human rights issues, highlighted, among other things, the inferior treatment of women and non-Muslims in Islamic states, and the hard penalties issued under sharia law.

In February 2021, BRISOC made its complaint public through an online petition and social media campaign. BRISOC also claimed that he had laughed at a passage from the Quran in a seminar.

Within days, he received a series of threatening emails and was alarmed after spotting a suspicious person loitering near his home in Bristol. Avon and Somerset Police took his concerns seriously but an investigation was dropped due to a lack of evidence. In July 2021, following a five-month enquiry, Bristol University fully exonerated him of all BRISOC's allegations. The decision was unanimously upheld in October of that year when a panel of three senior Bristol academics rejected BRISOC's appeal against the inquiry's decision.

He was not allocated any further teaching duties upon his return and says he was kept on what he regards as unofficial 'research leave' until his retirement in September 2022.

University bosses also dropped his module on Islam, China and the Far East so that Muslim students would “not feel that their religion is being singled out or in any way ‘othered’ by the class material”.

The grandfather-of-three said: [“Cancel culture is fast becoming the scourge of academia. A climate of fear is already replacing an environment of free, critical inquiry. There is a growing risk that many students will leave university with little critical insight, knowledge, or appreciation of the vital importance of intellectual freedom and evidence-based thinking in a healthy democracy. Some, wearing self-tied gags and blinkers, will go on to join the next generation of leaders. This does not bode well for the future of our society.”](#)

“Unless something effective is done about these challenges then within the next decade academic freedom will be irretrievably lost.”