



Canadian Association of University Teachers
Association canadienne des professeures et professeurs d'université

August 8, 2014

Dr. Phyllis M. Wise
Chancellor, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Vice President, University of Illinois
Office of the Chancellor
Swanlund Admin Bldg
601 E John
M/C 304
Champaign, IL 61820

Dear Dr. Wise:

On behalf of the 68,000 members of the Canadian Association of University Teachers we are writing to express our concern over allegations that the University of Illinois rescinded a job offer to Prof. Steven G. Salaita in response to controversial statements he posted on Twitter.

According to reports we have received, Prof. Salaita was scheduled to join the University's American Studies program later this month, and had resigned his position at Virginia Tech. However, it appears that he was recently contacted by your office and told that his appointment was withdrawn. It has been suggested that Prof. Salaita's appointment was blocked following concerns expressed about comments he had posted on Twitter involving the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

If the information we have received is accurate, then there is very good reason to conclude that Prof. Salaita's academic freedom has been violated. We remind you that the *1997 UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel* explicitly states that academic freedom includes "the right, without constriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom of teaching and discussion, freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof, freedom to express freely their opinion about the institution or system in which they work, [and] freedom from institutional censorship...." Whether one agrees or disagrees with Prof. Salaita's views on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, or whether one finds his comments justified or offensive is irrelevant to his right to exercise his academic freedom and to express his views without reprisal.

Academic freedom is arguably the central value of university life. When universities fail to defend the right of academics to exercise this freedom, no matter how controversial the expressed views may be, they compromise their core mission. We urge you to uphold the principle of academic freedom and to take all measures necessary to resolve this matter.

Sincerely,

David Robinson
Executive Director

Robin Vose
President