

November 7, 2006

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Madame Secretary:

It is with deep disappointment that I write you on behalf of our 15,000 U.S. and international members with respect to the October 21, 2006 denial of U.S. entry and revocation of the U.S. visa of South African Professor Adam Habib. Based upon the information available to us through the American Association of University Professors and American Association for the Advancement of Science, Professor Habib, Executive Director of the Democracy and Governance Research Programme of the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa, had previously entered the U.S. multiple times without incident. On this occasion he had planned to meet with officers from a number organizations including the Social Science Research Council, Columbia University, the National Institutes of Health, the World Bank, the Carnegie Foundation, and the Gates Foundation.

I must admit that it was not simply the denial of entry and revocation of his visa that was unsettling, but the reported manner in which those decisions were implemented. It is our understanding that, at JFK International Airport, Professor Habib was escorted to a holding room and questioned by U.S. border agents on his views on terrorism. He was detained for seven hours, his existing visa was revoked, and he was subsequently deported to South Africa and escorted to his return flight to Johannesburg by an armed guard. All of this transpired with no explanation to him of the reason for these actions.

You are the last person who needs to be reminded of prominence of the right to freedom of peaceful association embodied in the American Convention on Human Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I would appeal, as one political scientist to another, to your own academic experience and the indispensable importance for a political scientist to cultivate international associates, share experiences, freely pursue academic inquiries, and attend relevant international meetings. All of this applies to Professor Habib who developed many U.S. contacts during his studies in our country. He received his doctorate degree in political science at the City University of New York. There is a cruel irony in this episode as Professor Habib had already accepted an invitation to speak at an August 2007 meeting

in New York City sponsored by the American Sociological Association and he now finds himself without a valid visa to enter the U.S.

I am hopeful that you might encourage your staff to look into what our information suggests was a miscarriage of justice and that Professor Habib's U.S. visa could be restored prior to the August 2007 academic meeting. Isolated single incidents such as this cause significant injury to the individual, but they also have an impact to the larger world of scholarship. In this case it tarnishes a reputation for the freedom of scholarly inquiry that the United States has long fostered and from which we have benefited immeasurably. On behalf of the political science community, I would very much appreciate hearing from you about the facts of this case which, on the face of it, seem so out of keeping with our tradition.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Axelrod, President
American Political Science Association

cc: Assistant Secretary Thomas A. Shannon, Jr.
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