

Cancellation Case
Dr. Camila Vergara
Senior Lecturer
University of Essex Business School

Timeline

31 July

Given my research and advocacy for democracy and human rights, Professor Dirk Jörk, Professor of Political Theory and History of Ideas at TU Darmstadt, invited me to give the prestigious Eugen Kogon Lecture. Kogon was a German journalist, historian, and Nazi concentration camp survivor who advocated for democratic socialism. The lecture was scheduled for 20th November with the title: “Corrupt Republics: Oligarchy, War and the Destruction of Nature.”

Lecture poster:



31 October

I received an email signed by the professors of the Institute of Political Science cancelling their invitation due to the nature of my “public statements on the Israel-Palestine conflict.”

Email:

Dear Dr. Camila Vergara,

we were very grateful for your kind agreement to give this year's Kogon Lecture. However, after careful consideration, we have decided to withdraw our invitation. The Kogon Lecture was established to honor Eugen Kogon, one of our institute's founders, who was deeply committed to fostering democratic values, European integration and respectful discourse among nations and people. Given the nature of your public statements on the Israel-Palestine conflict, which we recently learned about through your account on X/twitter, we feel that proceeding as initially planned would not align with the purpose and spirit of this particular lecture series.

We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause and greatly appreciate your understanding.

best regards,

The professors of the Institute of Political Science

6 November

I made this cancellation [public](#) on the social media platform X, sharing the email I received and my response to them.

Dear professors,

The nature of my public statements is based on international law. Israel is an apartheid state that illegally occupies Palestinian land and massacres and starves civilians. Democratic values are based on equal liberty and human rights, not on segregation and domination. Speaking out against the atrocities and the violation of international norms is central to the future of democratic governance. Without international law, there is only barbarism.

Unfortunately, Germany has decided to disregard the advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice on Israel, and side with a state that is plausibly committing genocide, continuing to provide one third of the weapons that Israel uses to kill civilians in Gaza and Lebanon.

Your decision to cancel my lecture is disappointing but not unexpected, since the spaces for academic freedom and free speech in Germany are rapidly shrinking. I truly hope this dark period dissipates soon, and universities become again spaces for critical thinking and the defence of liberty and human rights.

Regards,

Dr Camila Vergara

Senior Lecturer in Management
Partnerships & Engagement Officer
Essex Business School
University of Essex

After this, that same day the professors uploaded a statement that said I “continuously spread anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli content in addition to criticism of Israel”, “accusations of apartheid and genocide,” “Holocaust analogies, conspiracy theories and anti-Semitic stereotypes.” The statement also made a direct connection to the new resolution on antisemitism approved by the Bundestag, arguing my presentation “would conflict with preventive measures against anti-Semitism.”

First Statement:



Absage der Kogon-Lecture

06.11.2024

Über ihren X-Account verbreitet Dr. Camila Vergara neben israelkritischen kontinuierlich auch antisemitische und antiisraelische Inhalte. Neben Apartheid- und Genozid-Vorwürfen finden sich hierbei Holocaust-Analogien, Verschwörungstheorien und antisemitische Stereotype. Wir haben daher entschieden, unsere Einladung für einen Vortrag im Rahmen der Kogon-Lecture zurückzuziehen, die wir in Unkenntnis dieser Äußerungen ausgesprochen hatten. Eine Durchführung des Vortrags stünde im Konflikt mit präventiven Maßnahmen gegen Antisemitismus und widerspräche auch dem Geist der Lecture zu Ehren des Institutsgründers Eugen Kogon, der sich für Völkerverständigung eingesetzt hat.

8 November

I wrote an email to Professor Jörk telling him I just had learned about that statement, that it was baseless and that it needed to be taken down because it was libellous.

Email:

Re: invitation to Darmstadt



Vergara, Camila <camila.vergara@essex.ac.uk>

To: Dirk Jörke

Friday, 8 November 2024 at 17:21

This message is high priority.

Hi Dirk,

I just found out your institution has uploaded a justification for disinviting me that is a complete fabrication, calling me antisemitic, holocaust denier, and a conspiracy theorist.

Please be so kind to tell your people that either they produce the proof for these grave accusations or delete this immediately, since it not only soils my pristine reputation but puts me in personal danger.

I have a meeting scheduled to explore judicial action to seek redress for libel. I hope it doesn't come to that, but I will not remain quiet, and I will see this through regardless of the consequences. So, please, given that you invited me, stand up for what is right.

Regards,

Camila

11 November

Instead of taking it down, the Institute uploaded an updated version of the statement that included two of my posts as 'proof' of the allegations. Neither of these posts contained holocaust analogies, conspiracy theories or anti-Semitic stereotypes, as alleged.

Updated statement:

Das Institut	Studium	Forschung	Aktuelles
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Absage der Kogon-Lecture

11.11.2024

Dr. Vergara hat unsere persönliche Kommunikation mit ihr über die Absage der Kogon-Lecture auf X veröffentlicht. Wir begründen daher hier auch unsere Entscheidung öffentlich.

Über ihren X-Account verbreitet Dr. Camila Vergara neben israelkritischen kontinuierlich auch antisemitische und antiisraelische Inhalte. Neben Apartheid- und Genozid-Vorwürfen finden sich hierbei Holocaust-Analogien, Verschwörungstheorien und antisemitische Stereotype.

Beispielhaft:

- → https://x.com/Camila_Vergara/status/1710655144981881116
- → https://x.com/Camila_Vergara/status/1780522405074448544

Wir haben daher entschieden, unsere Einladung für einen Vortrag im Rahmen der Kogon-Lecture zurückzuziehen, die wir in Unkenntnis dieser Äußerungen ausgesprochen hatten. Eine Durchführung des Vortrags stünde im Konflikt mit präventiven Maßnahmen gegen Antisemitismus und widerspräche auch dem Geist der Lecture zu Ehren des Institutsgründers Eugen Kogon, der sich für Völkerverständigung eingesetzt hat.

Post #1



Camila Vergara
@Camila_Vergara

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There is no liberation without violence, and no revolution without counterrevolution.

May emancipation rather than revenge guide Palestinian revolutionaries in their struggle to end apartheid. May they have the strength to withstand the coming wrath of the oppressor.

2:55 PM · Oct 7, 2023 · 3,470 Views

Post #2



Camila Vergara
@Camila_Vergara

...

Israel is an apartheid, terrorist state. This is a fact. It segregates & terrorizes Palestinians. These are legitimate grounds to call to "abolish the state of Israel." @USC should be proud of someone brave like Asna Tabassum, standing up for what is right despite the hate.



Abby D. Phillip @abbydphillip · Apr 17

USC valedictorian Asna Tabassum joined me on NewsNight tonight after her school cancelled her graduation speech citing "threats." What she planned to say and what she thinks really happened:



10:03 AM · Apr 17, 2024 · 1,420 Views



Camila Vergara @Camila_Vergara · Apr 17

...

Despite being framed as a "safety issue" (with no evidence), this is absolutely a freedom of speech case. Censorship based on attacks on social media posts (and likely the pressure of donors) is intolerable. This is viewpoint discrimination and needs to be fought back @ACLU

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Camila Vergara @Camila_Vergara · Apr 17

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Once someone has been given an academic platform to speak, withdrawing that platform based on the person's political views is a blatant violation of the right to free speech. @USC is a public university. The right to security in this case must not trump the right to expression.

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Camila Vergara @Camila_Vergara · Apr 17

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Asna was chosen Valedictorian because she is the person with highest grades, the most excellent exponent of the university's education. She should be protected & applauded, not shunned. She is the best of @USC, she should be heard at commencement & USC President should resign.

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