

Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

Goldsmiths, University of London
New Cross, London SE14 6NW
www.gold.ac.uk
Tel +44 (0)20 7919 7171

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Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to you in my capacity as Warden of Goldsmiths, University of London on behalf of the wider community of Goldsmiths staff, students, and alumni.

On 1 May 2021 we learned from widespread newspaper reporting that the Chair of Royal Museums Greenwich, Sir Charles Dunstone, has resigned following your decision not to reappoint as a trustee Dr Aminul Hoque MBE, Lecturer in Educational Studies at Goldsmiths. The news of the decision not to reappoint Dr Hoque has been met with shock and alarm by our community.

At a time when the question of how we should address Britain's past is seldom out of the headlines, Britain's museums need trustees with expertise in engaging with the public around difficult issues connected to our shared culture and history. Our museums also know that they have to attract more diverse and younger audiences if they are to avoid becoming culturally irrelevant. As Museums Association director Sharon Heal recently said: "Museums need boards that reflect a diversity of views and trustees that represent our communities."
[1]

Dr Hoque has more than 25 years of voluntary and professional experience in the youth, community and voluntary sector. Over that time he has made a major contribution to national youth work policies and training programmes, for example developing a manual for working with 'hard to reach' young people in Tower Hamlets, and providing research for the 2008 Nuffield enquiry into young people who are not in education, employment or training. He was awarded an MBE in 2008 for services to youth justice in east London.

Dr Hoque is also committed to public engagement around the positive contribution British-Bangladeshi communities have made to modern British culture and identity highlighted in his book *British Islamic Identity: Third Generation Bangladeshis from East London* and the recent BBC documentary *A Very British History: British Bangladeshis*.

Taken together, his considerable expertise in teaching and engaging with diverse audiences who might not normally consider visiting museums or other cultural institutions appears to make him an ideal trustee. That such a dedicated and respected academic has not been allowed to continue in a role which, by all accounts, he has been carrying out in an exemplary and highly effective manner is both disappointing and deeply puzzling.

Without an adequate explanation this decision may well be seen as part of a pattern in which a government that claims to champion free speech in fact seeks to cancel honest and open debate. As Museums Association director Sharon Heal put it: “It is concerning that when museums are striving to be more inclusive in terms of governance, workforce and audiences, it appears that some people are being deliberately excluded from boards because they don’t comply with certain opinions.” [1]

Not only could the perception of such a campaign prevent academics from making an invaluable contribution to our finest museums but it could also silence just the sort of constructive dialogue about British culture and identity that is likely to bring different communities together rather than divide them.

On behalf of our academic community I urge you, respectfully, to reconsider your apparent policy with regards to public appointments. We would also be grateful if you would explain why you did not see fit to reappoint Dr Hoque.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frances Corner', written in a cursive style.

Professor Frances Corner OBE
Warden

T: +44 (0)20 7919 7900

E: f.corner@gold.ac.uk

[1] Museums Journal, 04/05/2021

<https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2021/05/alarm-over-free-speech-after-government-vetoes-rmg-trustee/>