



The university is doomed if academic freedom is suppressed within its walls.

Open Letter by [Senator Max Brisson, JDD](#), May 25, 2025

One hundred Senators have addressed the Minister of Higher Education, denouncing the ideology prevalent at universities. This is based on the case of Professor Fabrice Balanche.

Mr. Minister of Higher Education, Some names suddenly crystallize an era. Not because Professor Fabrice Balanche seeks the limelight, but because others want to take it away from him. And this is how an event, a name, becomes a symbol, concentrating the tensions, fears, and rejections of an era.

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Unfortunately, this is what happened to Professor Balanche, a geography lecturer at Lyon 2 University who specializes in the Middle East. On April 1st, he was not refuted, but rather forced to stay silent in class, while being subjected to verbal abuse and physical violence. The culprits were supporters of an abhorrent ideology that promotes ignorance and rejects any form of disagreement or constructive discussion. Due to his analyses contradicting some militant dogmas, he was shunned.

The events at the Lyon 2 Faculty were not a trivial matter nor a mistake made by a group of radical youth. It was a concerted attack by ideological sectarians and Islamist-backed activists, constantly pushing the boundaries of our society. France has always held the university as a crucible of collective intelligence, based on a principle cherished by Condorcet: all thoughts can be expressed and all ideas can be discussed. The lecturer is not just a man or an academic. It's also a place where people can freely speak their minds and question established principles. What kind of institution would it be if such freedoms were taken away?

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Dear Minister, it is time to put an end to our naivety and take action. In the name of academic freedom, we could have expected an unequivocal and resolute stance from the university president in support of Professor Balanche. Instead, after several days of silence, the president of Lyon 2 stated that she was "not surprised given his analyses of Gaza." You yourself described these remarks as "regrettable." Indeed, it is unfortunate, Mr. Minister, but



Fabrice
Balanche

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not because it was spoken out of clumsiness. It reflects the deepest thoughts of many university staff members, who can no longer tolerate any contradiction and who ignore acts of violence if they serve their ideology.

In the name of radical beliefs, the hiring process for academics is skewed, funding is directed towards specific agendas, research is slanted, debate is suppressed, and diverse viewpoints are silenced.

Yes, Mr. Minister, the time for naivety has passed. Many of our universities have become strongholds of the political far left, protected by apathetic or collaborative leadership, faculty, and staff.

In the name of radical beliefs, the hiring process for academics is skewed, funding is directed towards specific agendas, research is slanted, debate is suppressed, and diverse viewpoints are silenced. Those who dare to challenge the status quo face ridicule, harassment, and even expulsion.

As senators, we firmly declare our stance: end this institutional timidity and this moral inquisition. We must not allow these inflamed individuals to trample on academic freedom and our cherished university system. For if our Republic has never shied away from the chaos of thoughts, it abhors the rigidity of doctrines above all.

We affirm it. They are not defending a man, but saving an idea: that truth is born in debate, not in silence. The university dies when freedom of speech disappears.

The undersigned:

Max Brisson, representative of the Republican senators, senator for Pyrénées-Atlantiques; Agnès Evren, representative of the Republican senators, senator for Paris; Mathieu Darnaud, president of the Republican senators, senator for Ardèche; Roger Karoutchi, former minister, senator for Hauts-de-Seine; Valérie Boyer, senator for Bouches-du-Rhône; and many others.