



ASBH
American Society for
Bioethics and Humanities

October 2, 2003

Rt Hon Chris Patten, CH
Chancellor
University of Oxford
University Offices
Wellington Square
Oxford, OX1 2JD United Kingdom

Dear Chancellor Patten:

As the principle academic and professional organization for bioethics in the United States, the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities wishes to express its concern regarding the recent response by Professor Wilkie to Amit Duvshani, an Israeli citizen, refusing to consider his candidacy for a PhD in molecular biology in Professor Wilkie's lab due to Mr. Duvshani's nationality. The ASBH is comprised of a community of academic and practicing ethicists, and issues of discrimination and fairness represent an important part of our daily professional activity.

The purpose of an academic community is to exchange ideas, to cross-fertilize different cultures and belief systems. To exclude anyone because of race, religion, or national origin is to undermine the very *raison d'être* of modern scholarly life. In addition, to single out the citizens of only one nation as worthy of this kind of exclusion is discriminatory and shows a bias that goes far deeper than political conviction.

We commend the prompt and forceful reaction of Oxford University to this breach of academic fairness. We hope that this case can serve to illustrate that academic boycotts of this kind are generally counterproductive, and that open dialogue and free exchange of ideas does more to foster political and social change than singling out citizens of one country for approbation.

We will soon post this letter on our Web site. We would be pleased to post your response.

Sincerely,

John Lantos, MD
President

cc: Sir Colin Lucas
Professor Bob Hepple, Chair of the Nuffield Council

4700 W. Lake Avenue
Glenview, IL 60025-1485
847/375-4745
Fax 877/734-9385
www.asbh.org