



## UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA LAW SCHOOL DEAN'S OFFICE

November 4, 2015

To the members of the Law School community:

Yesterday, the Law School hosted Professor Moshe Halbertal, a well known, widely respected expert on ethics and the law of war, for the annual Dewey Lecture on law and philosophy. Unfortunately, the start of Professor Halbertal's lecture was delayed for over 30 minutes by protesters shouting slogans and denouncing the Law School for inviting a speaker whose views they chose to caricature but not to hear. While it is regrettable that the protesters (none, I believe, from the Law School) chose to deny themselves the opportunity to engage and learn from a speaker of Halbertal's distinction, it is unacceptable that they should seek to deny other students and community members their own opportunity to hear an invited guest speak. Values of free speech and academic freedom are central to the University's mission; we disregard them at our peril.

The protesters were eventually removed from the building by campus police, who handled the situation with great professionalism and restraint. After the lecture concluded, audience members, including some quite critical of Israel, had an opportunity to ask questions and engage Professor Halbertal in discussion. Ironically, the central theme of Professor Halbertal's talk was that the military should be prepared to accept greater risks to its own forces in order to enhance protections for civilian non-combatants, not something one would expect to generate much protest.

But whether a speaker's views are controversial is beside the point. As members of a University community, we should welcome—indeed, insist—on hearing a wide range of viewpoints, and we should condemn any efforts to silence free speech through protests of the sort that took place at the Law School yesterday. The Law School will continue to do both.

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