

AHMADINEJAD DESERVES NO PLATFORM AT COLUMBIA

Catholic League president Bill Donohue released the following statement today regarding Columbia University's decision to host Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at a forum on September 24:

"Universities were not founded to promote freedom of speech, but to pursue truth. The pursuit of the truth, of course, is contingent on free speech as a means towards that end. But it is precisely because speech at a university is conditional that it cannot be absolute. For example, speech which unarguably does not facilitate the pursuit of truth, or which is by all rational measures demonstrably false, should not be given a platform at any institution of higher education. That is why circus entertainers are not asked to perform on college campuses, nor are spokesmen from the Flat Earth Society invited to speak.

"There is a place for such persons, and in New York City that would include Madison Square Garden. That is where Ahmadinejad belongs—not at Columbia. Anyone who supports terror, pledges to destroy a sovereign nation (Israel), punishes by death anyone who 'insults' religion (Article 513 of the Iranian Constitution), denies the Holocaust and thumbs his nose at the international community, has no legitimate role to play at a university.

"Columbia obviously does not believe that the highest virtue is freedom of speech, otherwise it wouldn't have rescinded its invitation to Minuteman founder Jim Gilchrist to speak on campus; it did so last week. Last year, after Lisa Anderson, dean of the university's School of International and Public Affairs, extended to Ahmadinejad the right to speak on campus, Columbia president Lee Bollinger overruled her by saying he

couldn't be certain the invitation would 'reflect the academic values that are the hallmark of a University event.' Now the same school is hosting the Iranian thug at Monday's event. President Bollinger needs to explain to all New Yorkers why his reason for stopping Ahmadinejad from speaking last year doesn't apply this year. He can't, and that is why he needs to intervene again and stop this obscenity from happening on his watch."