Rushdie's Death
Threat Is Real

It is amazing to me that there are still people who do not understand the seriousness of the threat against Salman Rushdie's life. Vipul Bhushan ("Rushdie Lecture Should Have Been Published," Nov. 30) admits that Rushdie "does have exceptional worries about his safety," but then attributes those worries solely to "religious zealots." While these people certainly pose a threat to Rushdie, Bhushan has neglected to mention another, at least as significant danger. There is a $2 million bounty on Rushdie's head. This widensthe field of the "realists" to include professional assassins and amateur heartbreakers.

And I would contend, despite Bhushan's assurances, that it would be very nearly impossible to secure Rushdie's safety, given that such professionals know where their target was.

MIT's actions in this case were not "underhanded" or "clitish." They were the measures necessary to ensure the safety of an honored guest. Rushdie could not, and would not, have come if the event had been publicized.

As it was, 20 officers were needed to ensure his safety, and the official who wouldn't tell Bhushan who visiting was serving the same purpose as those the audience: making sure Rushdie left MIT safely.

No one in the MIT community was excluded from the lecture. It was open to all of us, and it was, advertised, a lecture to honor a famous guest. Yet, what we have been let be was not at all contrary to the "Institution's mission of promoting the free exchange of ideas." No one, including Rushdie, would have feared the benefit of hearing Rushdie's ideas if these kinds of precautions were not taken. As it is, he is risking his life each time he makes a surprise appearance.

Catherine Preston '95

Freedom of Expression Needs to Thrive at MIT

The Tech received this letter addressed to "Samuel Rushdie.

The members of the Student Association for Freedom of Expression would like to express our warm welcome to you, our newest, albeit honorary, member of the MIT community. More than anyone on campus, you know of the dangers of censorship. By having been forced to take your life on what you believe, you have become a symbol of the fight for freedom of expression around the globe. In honoring you, MIT has expressed its desire to resolve the conflict where it is at the face of censorship.

Sadly, those rewards are not afforded to the other members of this Institution. According to a new harassment policy, each of your fellow members in the MIT community must now follow the expression of offensive ideas is now discouraged, and may even be actionable under MIT's definition of harassment. The newly published guide tells us not to publish the right to free expression and the desire to not be offended to a balancing test. It advises that "people who seem to have offended others by their manner of expression should consider immediately stopping their actions. The administration's incapacity to uniformly interpret rules from within, or discourage punishment of a published text has been well documented, most recently in the Nov. 30 issue of The Tech. Coupled with such problems the dangers such a broad policy presents are too numerous to list here. We urge you to read the harassment guide for yourself and judge its attempt to deal with freedom of expression (particularly outlined on page 8).

Had you been forced to publish in such an environment, one can only wonder if MIT would have encouraged you to remove the possibility offensive material from The Satanic Verses. Even The Boston Globe itself contained a letter from a Muslim graduate student in which he compared Rushdie's novel to the "so-called "Combat Zone colonialism" and of "injuring the deepest love of others." The policies that would be free to resolve their objections, should those detractors wish to make a claim of harassment against you, it is not our mission to either condone or condemn your opinions or those of your detractors. It is only our fear that controversial opinions such as yours will now be suppressed by the (very real) objections of other campus members. In pursuing your rights, you know of the dangers of censorship. We view our obligations such a broad policy presents are too numerous to list here. We urge you to read the harassment guide for yourself and judge its attempt to deal with freedom of expression (particularly outlined on page 8).

Many of the most provocative and noteworthy ideas are deeply offensive to a great many people, particularly to the administration. It is clear that much of the support for Rushdie comes from those who believe that he should be able to write whatever he wishes without facing threats. This is where we feel MIT's actions in this case were not "injuring the deepest love of others." The policies that would be free to resolve their objections, should those detractors wish to make a claim of harassment against you, it is not our mission to either condone or condemn your opinions or those of your detractors. It is only our fear that controversial opinions such as yours will now be suppressed by the (very real) objections of other campus members. In pursuing your rights, you know of the dangers of censorship. It is amazing to me that there are still people who do not understand the seriousness of the threat against Salman Rushdie's life. Vipul Bhushan ("Rushdie Lecture Should Have Been Published," Nov. 30) admits that Rushdie "does have exceptional worries about his safety," but then attributes those worries solely to "religious zealots." While these people certainly pose a threat to Rushdie, Bhushan has neglected to mention another, at least as significant danger. There is a $2 million bounty on Rushdie's head. This widensthe field of the "realists" to include professional assassins and amateur heartbreakers.

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Opinion Policy

Editorial

Editorials, printed in a distinctive format, are the official opinion of The Tech. They are written by the editorial board, which consists of the chairman, editor in chief, managing editor, executive editor, and various student editors.

Dissents, marked as such in a distinctive format, are the opinions of the signed members of the editorial board choosing to publish their disagreement with the editorials.

Columns and editorial cartoons are written by individuals and represent the opinion of the author, not necessarily that of the newspaper.

Letters to the editor are welcome. They must be typed, double-spaced and addressed to The Tech, P.O. Box 397029, Cambridge, Mass. 02139-0901, or be sent electronically to tech@mit.edu. Electronic submissions in plain text format may be mailed to letters@tech.mit.edu. All submissions are due by 4 p.m. two days before the date of publication.

Letters and cartoonists must use the author's signature, addresses, and phone numbers. Unsigned letters will not be accepted. No letter or cartoon will be printed anonymously without the express approval of The Tech. The Tech reserves the right to edit or condense letters; shorter letters will be given higher priority. Once submitted, all letters become property of The Tech, and will not be returned. We regret we cannot publish all of the letters we receive.

To Reach Us

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