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EDITORIAL OPEN ACCESS

Statement on Academic Freedom in Geography

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ABSTRACT

A short statement on academic freedom in the current political climate as it relates to academic geographers, from representatives of the RGS-IBG RHE Committee and the Editors of *TIBG*.

1 | Statement From RGS-IBG Vice President, Research & Higher Education Committee, RGS-IBG Chair of Conference, 2026 and TIBG Editors

Now is a time of deep international political upheaval, geo-political tension, violence and ongoing wars. Domestic politics are equally increasingly charged with heated debates, often from very oppositional standpoints. While seemingly political, these tensions are simultaneously experienced as social, cultural, economic and often felt in a deeply personal and embodied way, especially for those whose very right to exist, to change or to belong is being 'debated' or is open to question or critique. The impact of these tensions is felt unevenly across academic geography and amongst geographers. Some voices are given more visibility and power; others experience increasing marginalisation as geo-political tensions and political debate evolve.

We collectively want to recognise these intensely difficult and fraught political moments, defend academic freedom, and encourage a culture of mutual care and respect. Academic freedom and freedom of speech are important but they carry with them responsibilities. Our role as academic geographers is always to question, challenge, read for difference and hold open spaces for critique and critical reflection. But it is also vital we keep listening and thinking. We need to respect diverse perspectives and anti-normative and non-normative positions. We need to see our differences as a starting point for debate and discussion, not

division, while also allowing space for withdrawal, retreat and recovery when needed. In our roles as representatives, chairs and editors, we ask our colleagues at this moment to engage with each other in ways that generate and foster care (rather than dismissing it), to say things carefully and with purpose, always mindful of the power of our words to hurt and harm, and to be generous and respectful in the ways in which we make use of our academic freedom.

Data Availability Statement

No new data.

The information, practices and views in this article are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).

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