

# UAE censors opt to approve controversial Gulf book

25 September 2008

By [John Gill](#)

An academic book that a UK author says was banned in the United Arab Emirates has now been formally authorised for sale by censors.

*Times Higher Education* reported this month (4 September) on concerns expressed by Chris Davidson, a Gulf expert based at the University of Durham, that his book, *Dubai: The Vulnerability of Success*, had been blacklisted by the state's National Media Council (NMC).

He and his publisher said book distributors in the UAE had told them that they had been instructed not to supply the book, which outlines Dubai's economic success and the region's history of terrorist activity.

The NMC denied that there had ever been a ban. A spokesman said that the fact that the book's authorisation for sale came months after it was published and so soon after international media coverage of Dr Davidson's claims of a ban, was "irrelevant" as the book was submitted for approval only a few weeks ago.

But Dr Davidson said that the publisher - Hurst and Co - had evidence that the book was submitted for approval months ago.

Ibrahim Al Abed, director-general of the NMC, said that only books that were deemed pornographic or offensive to a religion were censored in the UAE, and that it was policy to keep censorship to a minimum.

However, he added that Dr Davidson's book contained "a very considerable number of factual errors", which was "disappointing" though not grounds for a ban.

Responding to this, Dr Davidson said: "Here we have a government official casting aspersions on an academic's credibility, product and professionalism. That is a serious encroachment on civil society and freedom of speech.

"The book distributors are willing and have been attempting to place orders for three months. We will only be satisfied when the book appears on the shelves of the UAE."

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