PALESTINE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

Dear Ms Nieuwoudt, 30 October 2025

Formal objection to AHI Drakenstein's invitation to Mr Rob Hersov to deliver a 'State of the Nation' address on 26 November 2025

We, the **Cape Winelands 4 Palestine**, a branch of the **Palestine Solidarity Campaign (Western Cape)**, supported by a broad coalition of community organisations, faith groups, and human-rights advocates from Paarl and the wider Drakenstein and surrounding areas, write to **formally object** to AHI Drakenstein's decision to host Mr Rob Hersov as a keynote speaker.

We **respectfully but firmly request** the **immediate cancellation** of this event.

Hosting Mr Hersov, whose record includes inflammatory racial rhetoric, open contempt for South Africa's democratic institutions, and denial of atrocities internationally recognised as genocidal, would constitute a profound ethical and reputational error. It would also stand in contradiction to AHI Drakenstein's stated mission to promote inclusive business leadership and community development.

Grounds for objection

1. Denial of genocide and war crimes

Mr Hersov has repeatedly denied that Israel's actions in Gaza constitute genocide and has publicly dismissed the legitimacy of South Africa's case before the International Court of Justice. Such statements not only trivialise the suffering of Palestinian civilians but also undermine South Africa's constitutionally grounded foreign policy, which centres on human rights and international law.

2. Pattern of divisive and inflammatory rhetoric

Mr Hersov's record extends well beyond foreign policy. He has referred to **Nelson Mandela** as a 'terrorist' and echoed (unsubstantiated) 'white-genocide' narrative. These public statements, documented in reputable national media, have provoked widespread condemnation and are incompatible with South Africa's values of equality, reconciliation, and social cohesion.

3. Un-transparent airport development and fortress mentality.

Mr Hersov is leading an investment consortium to develop a second Western Cape airport, claiming that this will provide hundreds of thousands of jobs but there is no evidence presented to back this up. The 1990s Arms Deal and the 2010 World Cup event were justified using similar arguments about economic development and job multipliers, but these failed to materialise and poverty, unemployment and inequality have increased since then, deepening the social crisis in our country. Mr Hersov has been publicly denigrating residents helping the homeless, in Sea Point (Cape Town), revealing his lack of compassion. Thus, we question the authenticity of the stated socially inclusive economic developmental potential of this project.

4. Institutional responsibility

Platforming is never neutral. By offering Mr Hersov a stage, AHI Drakenstein effectively **endorses and legitimises** his views. Doing so communicates to members and the wider public that denial of war crimes, racially charged invective and Thatcherite privatisation are acceptable content for civic dialogue. That would represent a serious lapse of institutional judgement.

5. Reputational and community harm

Your decision risks alienating businesses, faith communities, and citizens who uphold ethical investment and inclusive development. It could expose AHI Drakenstein to reputational damage and potential boycotts – outcomes that are avoidable through responsible leadership.

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Our requests:

We therefore urge AHI Drakenstein to:

1. **Cancel** Mr Hersov's scheduled appearance on 26 November 2025;
2. **Issue a public statement** clarifying that AHI Drakenstein does not endorse genocide denialism or divisive political rhetoric, and seeks to promote rational debate about serious economic development policies and strategies; and
3. **Adopt clear speaker-vetting guidelines** to ensure that future events reflect values consistent with constitutional democracy, equality, human dignity and scientific economic debate.

Click here to read the **Supporting Evidence**

Should these steps not be taken, we will proceed with a **picket** outside the event to register community opposition.

We appeal to your sense of civic duty and moral leadership to uphold the values of justice, accountability and unity, as well as fostering a culture of rational and scientific debate, which underpin both business ethics and our national character.

We look forward to your considered response.

Yours faithfully,

Palestine Solidarity Campaign (Western Cape)

Professor Usuf Chikte - Coordinator, Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC)

Zaahirah Kozain - Secretary, Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC)

Email – enquiries@psc-ct.org.za

Website - **Home - PSC Cape Town**

On behalf of concerned community members and human-rights advocates:

CW4P - Cape Winelands 4 Palestine

SAC4P – South African Christians 4 a Free Palestine

SAJFP – South African Jews for a Free Palestine

RIWA – Rural Islamic Welfare Association

HCW4P – Healthcare Workers 4 Palestine

SOSL - Save our Sacred lands

Woman on Farms Projects

WC4P – West Coast 4 Palestine

Stellenbosch 4 Palestine

SC4P – Southern Cape 4 Palestine

Strand 4 Palestine

Somerset West Solidarity Team