

Thursday, March 30, 1989

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Arab bias is alleged at UCSB

News-Press staff report

A blind former UCSB teaching assistant born in a Palestinian refugee camp is protesting the Santa Barbara library's refusal to allow him to address the Committee for Palestinian Justice in a library meeting room.

Library Director Carol Keator said Tuesday that the denial was based on a longtime policy requiring that opposing viewpoints on controversial subjects be presented as part of the same program.

As a result, the speaker, Hisham Ahmed of Santa Barbara, addressed the Committee for Palestinian Justice Sunday afternoon at the Unitarian Church parish hall.

The committee had to pay a fee at the church, whereas the library meeting room would have been free, Ahmed told the News-Press. He charged that the denial amounted to prejudice against the Palestinians.

Keator, who has been in the Santa Barbara library system for 16 years, said the 1978 policy has

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been enforced "numerous times" in the same way, to require that programs include "as many points of view as possible."

An anti-abortion group wanting to show a film and an animal rights organization wishing to show a film with graphic scenes were also denied, she said.

The main library's meeting

room is "one of the few meeting rooms in town with no fee" and large enough to seat about 100 persons, Keator said.

Ahmed said Keator told the Committee for Palestinian Justice that the room could be used if a speaker representing the Israeli point of view was invited.

He said the meeting would be open to the public and anyone could express a point of view. But Keator that format was insufficient to allow the meeting.