



**Middle  
East  
Studies  
Association**  
of North America, Inc.

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LTG Robert M. Williams, Commandant  
U.S. Army War College  
Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013  
*Robert.m.williams@us.army.mil*

Dear Gen. Williams:

On behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA), I am writing to express our concern about complaints by Dr. Sherifa Zuhur, Research Professor of Islamic and Regional Studies at the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College (USAWC) and a member of MESA, that she has been treated by USAWC authorities in ways that may violate USAWC's stated policy with regard to academic freedom, as well as the standards of USAWC's accrediting organization, the Middle States Association of Colleges.

MESA was founded in 1966 to promote scholarship and teaching on the Middle East and North Africa. The preeminent organization in the field, the Association publishes the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and has more than 2800 members worldwide. MESA is committed to defending academic freedom, both within the region and in connection with the study of the region in North America and elsewhere.

USAWC policy states that "academic freedom for its faculty and students is fundamental and essential to the health of the academic institution." However, Professor Zuhur has reported to us that, in apparent violation of this policy, she has been subjected to censorship and harassment because of views she has expressed or which have been imputed to her. Among other things, Professor Zuhur reports that she has had one or more scheduled lectures at USAWC cancelled at the last minute, apparently because some USAWC officials disagreed with her opinions about, and analyses of, U.S. policy in the Middle East, and also that she has been harassed for allegedly failing to comply with USAWC's procedures for prior review of publications and public statements – procedures that she believes have been applied arbitrarily and inconsistently and that may in any case not conform to USAWC's avowed commitment to academic freedom. In these circumstances it is not surprising that Professor Zuhur believes that her employment contract at USAWC is not being renewed because of her views and beliefs, rather than because of her job performance.

Professor Zuhur should not be made to feel that she is being subjected to an atmosphere of harassment and intimidation that makes it impossible for her to do her job properly and that denies USAWC students and faculty, and the wider public, the full benefit of her expertise. I therefore urge you to investigate Professor Zuhur's complaints and ensure that all USAWC personnel comply fully and consistently with its policies on academic freedom and on prior review of publications and public remarks by faculty.

Sincerely,

Mervat F. Hatem  
MESA President  
Professor of Political Science, Howard University

cc: Sherifa Zuhur