

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

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June 11, 2010

Professor Muhammad Sayyid Ahmad Salih al-Zoghby
President
Suez Canal University
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Dear President al-Zoghby,

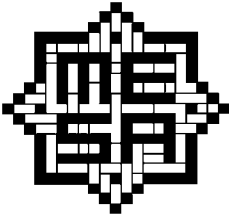
I write on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom (CAF) of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) to protest the disciplinary action taken against Mr. Ahmad Galal, a student in his final year in the Faculty of Medicine of Suez Canal University. Last April Mr. Galal was the victim of a severe beating by the University Security Forces (USF) for distributing a magazine on campus. Rather than protest against this flagrant violation of academic freedom, a University Disciplinary Committee issued a suspension order against Mr. Galal. No disciplinary action is known to have been taken against the members of the USF involved in the incident.

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 nearly 3000 members worldwide. MESA is committed to ensuring academic freedom and freedom of expression, both within the region and in connection with the study of the region in North America and elsewhere.

As we understand the facts, they are as follows. On 8 April 2010, the head of the USF approached Mr. Galal and warned him of dire consequences if he did not desist from distributing on campus *Sawt al-Jami'a* (The University Voice), a student publication whose latest issue was dedicated to al-Aqsa Mosque. An hour later, 7 members of the USF subjected Mr. Galal to severe beating inside the outpatient gynecology ward. Based on a medical report allegedly documenting injuries suffered by members of the USF, a police report was filed against Mr. Galal in the nearby police station claiming that it was he who had beaten the 7 members of the USF.

On 18 April 2010, a Disciplinary Committee issued a 30-day suspension order against Mr. Galal. Although the USF had reportedly conducted its own investigation of the matter, neither the Disciplinary Committee nor Prof. Sobhy al-Shishi, Director of Student Affairs in the Faculty of Medicine, either followed up on this investigation or interviewed any member of the USF who had been involved in the incident.

Given the many questions that these procedures raised, the Board of the Faculty of Medicine took a unanimous decision on 10 May 2010 to form a fact-finding mission and to appoint Dr. Ismail Youssef, Head of the Department of Psychiatry, as its Chair. The mission asked Prof. Khalil Ali Khalil, General Manager of Suez Canal University Hospitals, to provide the names of the doctors who had written the medical report which concluded that Mr. Galal had beaten the 7 members of the USF and had inflicted the injuries and contusions found on their bodies. Dr. Khalil refused to cooperate with the fact-finding mission.



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Based on this suspicious medical report and with an expulsion order on his academic record, Mr. Galal now faces a misdemeanor charge and is scheduled to appear in court on 19 June 2010. The charge he now faces is "Attacking a civil servant while performing his duty". CAF, a committee composed primarily of university faculty members (many with administrative experience), is deeply concerned by these violations of academic freedom at Suez Canal University. Mr. Galal was practicing his legitimate right of self expression and academic freedom when he distributed the student publication. Rather than defend and support Mr. Galal's right, the Disciplinary Committee disregarded the egregious assault by the USF and proceeded to suspend the student for 30 days.

We therefore strongly urge you to reverse the suspension order issued against Mr. Ahmad Galal. We also urge you to conduct a thorough investigation of the USF, including its head, and to issue firm and clear directives that the duties of the USF are limited to maintaining order on campus and protecting university buildings and facilities, and that under no circumstances should they interfere with academic matters and/or limit academic freedom and freedom of expression on campus. Finally, we urge you to order Dr. Khalil to cooperate fully with the fact-finding mission and to reveal the details of the medical report that was the basis of Mr. Galal's suspension.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Roger M.A. Allen

MESA President

Professor of Arabic and Comparative Literature, University of Pennsylvania