

**Middle
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of North America, Inc.

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October 18, 2010

His Excellency Muhammad Husni Mubarak
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Dear President Mubarak and Minister Helal,

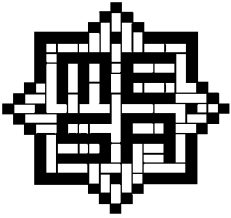
I am writing on behalf of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) and its Committee on Academic Freedom (CAF) to express grave concern regarding numerous recent violations against students on several Egyptian university campuses. As soon as the academic year began in September, university security forces and administrators on several campuses set about punishing and assaulting students engaged in lawful, peaceful activism.

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 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.

According to press and other media reports, for the past several weeks, university security officers and administrators have been systematically repressing student activities prior to student union elections scheduled for October 18. Students have been verbally abused, beaten, detained, arrested, and suspended for expressing their views on issues of public concern.

Among the most disturbing incidents that have come to our attention are the following:

- On September 26, MA student Marihan Ibrahim Ghorab at Tanta University was arrested for putting up posters welcoming new students to campus. Ghorab was taken to the Tanta police station where a report was filed against her for belonging to the 6th April movement. The prosecution ordered her release later that evening.
- On September 27, the head of the university security forces and three other officers at Fayoum University beat and kicked student Hisham Yahya for his refusal to be searched at the campus gates. Yahya had participated in collecting student signatures on reform advocate Mohamed ElBaradie's program of political reform.

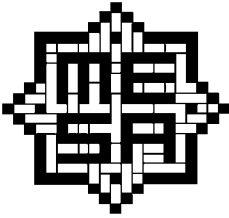


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- On September 29, five students at Ain Shams University supporting ElBaradei's reform program were detained for four hours by university security forces and verbally assaulted, kicked, beaten, and burned with cigarettes on the palms of their hands. The prosecution referred the students to the medical examiner to prepare a report on their injuries.
- At Kafr al-Shaykh University, student Muhammad 'Amer was suspended for one week and student Hasan Gom'a was suspended for two weeks, both without due process, for distributing to incoming students semester schedules signed by students of the Muslim Brothers.
- At Banha University, the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering suspended 11 Muslim Brother students for one month for their "Reformers" campaign greeting incoming students and collecting signatures for ElBaradei's reform program.
- At Fayoum University, five students were suspended for one month for their "Reformers" campaign collecting signatures for ElBaradei's reform program.
- At Mansoura University, 12 students were referred to a disciplinary hearing for putting up posters on campus advertising the "Reformers" campaign.
- At Menoufiyya University, 17 Muslim Brother students were suspended for one month for putting up posters of the "Reformers" campaign.
- At Ain Shams University, third-year law student Essam Muhammad was searched and detained by university security forces. Muhammad was then interrogated by the University's legal affairs office for distributing leaflets, and the administration issued a decree barring him from sitting for fall semester exams.
- At al-Azhar University (Zaqaziq campus), university security forces forcibly attempted to search all female students before allowing them onto campus. The students resisted and clashes ensued, leading to the hospitalization of student Somayya Ashraf al-Saidy. Male students were beaten, and 27 of them were taken to the Zaqaziq police station. Some were later released while nine others remain in custody, awaiting orders from the prosecution.

The behavior of university security forces is a blatant violation of Egypt's laws and constitution. Article 129 of the Penal Code punishes public servants who use force against citizens with up to one year imprisonment. Article 41 of the Constitution holds personal freedom sacrosanct, forbidding arrest or detention of any persons without an order by the



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prosecution. And Article 18 of the Constitution guarantees the independence of universities and scientific research centers, a right that Egyptian students and professors have long sought to uphold.

We urge you to investigate these unlawful acts, to put an end to them, to release arrested students, and to reinstate suspended students. The Egyptian government has maintained that "Egypt is currently undergoing a process of reform aimed at broadening political participation, ensuring freedom of expression in all its forms, upholding human rights, and empowering and enabling women and the civil society organizations to participate fully and effectively in public life." ("Political Reform in Egypt," Embassy of Egypt in Washington, D.C.). We call on you to lift all restrictions on students' peaceful participation in public life.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Roger M.A. Allen
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Professor of Arabic and Comparative Literature, University of Pennsylvania

cc:

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