



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

1219 N Santa Rita Ave
The University of Arizona
Tucson AZ 85721 USA

520 621-5850
520 626-9095 fax
caf@mesana.org
www.mesana.org



February 4, 2016

His Excellency Abdel Fattah al-Sisi
President, Arab Republic of Egypt
'Abdin Palace
Cairo, Egypt
Fax: +20-2-390-1998

His Excellency Sameh Shoukry
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Fax: +20-2-576-7967

Major-General Magdy Abdul Ghaffar
Minister of the Interior
Fax: +20-2-796-0682
center@iscmi.gov.eg

Your Excellencies President al-Sisi, Major-General Abdul Ghaffar, and Mr. Shoukry:

We write to you on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) to express our outrage regarding the news of the apparent torture and murder of Giulio Regeni, an Italian student from Cambridge University, who disappeared in Cairo on 25 January and whose body was found on a road outside Cairo on 3 February.

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 3,000 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.

Mr Regeni, a PhD student at the Department of Politics and International Studies (Polis) at the University of Cambridge, was a visiting scholar at the American University in Cairo (AUC). According to news and other sources, he left his apartment at 8 pm on 25 January with the intention of taking the metro from Duqqi to Bab al-Louq to meet a friend, but never arrived.

We understand that, although initial statements from your government attributed Mr. Regeni's death to a robbery gone awry or a traffic accident, State Prosecutor Ahmed Nagi has now admitted that there were signs of torture on the body, including cigarette burns and knife wounds.

Even were this case an isolated incident, it would demand a thorough investigation to identify those responsible and bring them to justice. However, what makes this case even more disturbing is that it is but the most recent, if the most deadly, example of the growing danger posed by the current political climate in Egypt to all those engaged in academic work. We have written to you repeatedly over the past months to express our deep concern regarding a range and number of violations of academic freedom and freedom of expression that would require countless pages to list in full*:

- denial of entry to the country and harassment of numerous scholars and researchers;



February 4, 2016

Page 2

- gross state interference in university student and faculty governance;
- the dismissals and expulsions of hundreds of students and faculty;
- the sentencing of academics to death.

Now, an academic has been brutally murdered.

In the past cases, we have *respectfully requested* your attention to these matters in keeping with international norms regarding academic freedom, various provisions of Egyptian law, and international treaties to which your government is a signatory.

However, the climate of repression and intimidation in which our colleagues in Egypt – Egyptian and non-Egyptian—have tried to persevere in conducting their academic work has only continued to deteriorate. Indeed, Regeni's murder, far from an aberration, is in fact a predictable outcome of the progression of state repression of academics and students.

As a result, Giulio Regeni's case requires of us that in this letter we *demand* of your government, a full and impartial investigation of his death, and the arrest and prosecution of those responsible.

We await your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'B. Baron'.

Beth Baron
MESA President
Professor, City University of New York

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Laurie A. Brand'.

Laurie A. Brand
CAF Chair
Professor, University of Southern California

cc:

- Dr. El-Sayed Abdel-Khalek, Minister of Higher Education
- Thomas E. Thomason, Acting President, American University in Cairo
- The Honorable Yasser Reda, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United States