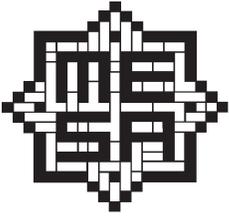


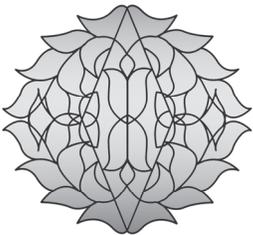
26 October 2009



**Middle
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MESA '09

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Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
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Your Excellency,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom (CAF) of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) to express my shock and dismay at the arrest, conviction, and harsh sentencing of an esteemed colleague, Dr. Kian Tajbakhsh.

MESA was founded in 1966 to promote scholarship and teaching on the Middle East and North Africa . The preeminent organization in the field, MESA publishes the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and has more than 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.

We wrote to you earlier (on July 16, 2009) with regard to Dr. Tajbakhsh's detention, expressing the fear that he would be the victim of concocted allegations. Those fears have materialized. On two previous occasions (when Dr. Tajbakhsh was detained in 2007), CAF also expressed concern about your government's treatment of him. Dr. Tajbakhsh is a highly respected scholar who has disavowed political involvement in recent years. His arrest was unwarranted and his conviction, based on flimsy evidence and a clearly coerced confession, left his colleagues throughout the world aghast. The twelve-year sentence sends a deeply disturbing message about your government's respect for elementary human rights (most particularly, the right to a fair trial) and its willingness to abide by the most basic elements of academic freedom.

We urge that you arrange for Dr. Tajbakhsh's immediate release so that he can resume his much-valued academic activities. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Virginia H. Aksan, PhD
MESA President
Department of History, McMaster University