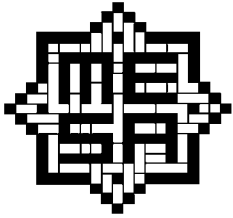


29 April 2009



**Middle
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MESA '09

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei
Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran
c/o H.E. Mohammad Khazaei
Ambassador of Iran to the United Nations
Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
622 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Via fax: (212) 867-7086 and e-mail *iran@un.int*

Your Excellency,

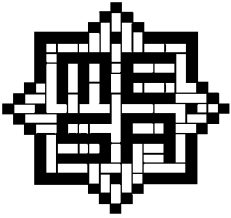
I am writing to you on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) to express our grave concern regarding the recent wave of arrests, beatings, intimidation, and expulsion by the security forces on a number of Iranian university campuses of students engaged in peaceful and legal acts of freedom of expression and assembly. We urge you and all officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran to ensure that international standards of academic freedom as well as Iranian constitutional guarantees are fully protected on Iranian university campuses.

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.

Since December 2008 alone, wide-ranging "security" operations have been carried out against students at the Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shahr-e Rey campus of the Islamic Azad University, Amirkabir University of Technology and the Allameh Tabatabaei University in Tehran, as well as at various other universities in the provinces of Sistan and Baluchistan, Tehran, Hamadan, Markazi, Kermanshah, Mazandaran, Yazd, Fars, Isfahan, East Azerbaijan, and Lorestan, among other locations. Most recently, on April 13 at the Noshirvani University of Technology in the city of Babol around twenty students were banned from campus, with a number of students on the same campus beaten and arrested earlier in the month.

MESA calls on Iranian authorities to respect and guarantee the full rights of academic and intellectual freedom, freedom of expression, and the right to peaceful assembly on all university campuses. We urge the authorities to immediately rescind all punitive measures against the students in question and to release all arrested students, some of whom are feared to be subject to torture.

We feel compelled to remind you, Your Excellency, that the rights of individuals to freedom of thought, opinion, and speech are explicitly protected under the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Article 23), as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Articles 18, 19, 21), to which the Islamic Republic of Iran is a signatory. The



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Re: Student harassment on university campuses
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arbitrary persecution and maltreatment of students on university campuses can only be conceived as a direct attack on the principles of academic freedom and critical intellectual inquiry.

Your Excellency, we trust that you will appreciate the seriousness of this matter and urge you to use your good offices and take appropriate measures in securing freedom of expression and the right of peaceful assembly on Iranian university campuses.

Sincerely,

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