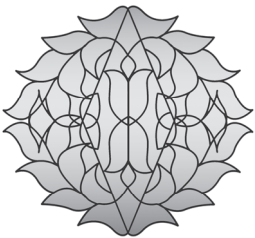


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**MESA '09**

October 7, 2009

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  
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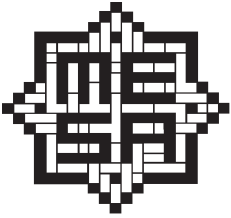
Your Excellency,

I am writing to you for the fourth time this year (2009) on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom (CAF) of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) to express our very grave concern and mounting consternation over the continued intimidation, arrests, expulsions, and unwarranted violent crackdown carried out by the Iranian authorities against peaceful student activists on Iranian university campuses, as well as the latest spate of harassment and dismissal of university faculty on grounds of political and ideological dissent.

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

I am again compelled to bring to your attention the deteriorating situation on Iranian university campuses, where the state-appointed officials and university and other security forces are engaged in routine violations of the basic rights of students and faculty to freedom of speech and opinion. This takes place in direct breach of both the rights guaranteed under the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Articles 18, 19, 21), to which the Islamic Republic of Iran is a signatory. Over the summer, the security forces of the IRI engaged in widespread campaigns of violence against students on Iranian campuses, resulting in the deaths of a number of non-violent student activists along with serious injuries to, and the detention of, hundreds of other students. The security forces also engaged in large-scale destruction of student dormitories and ransacking of personal belongings.

Recently, with the start of the new academic year in Iran, the situation has grown even more alarming. There are increasing indications of a premeditated large-scale purge being unleashed by the authorities, intended to rid the campuses across the country of student activists and those faculty deemed ideologically unsuitable. Over the past few days alone, a number of student leaders and activists belonging to the organization, Office for Fostering [Student] Solidarity (*daftar-e tahkim-e vahdat*), as well as other student activists have been arrested at the University of Tehran, Sharif University (Tehran), and on other campuses around the country. While a number of these students have now been released, many remain in detention and are denied access to due process of law. There are also increasing reports that detained student activists are frequently subject to physical torture and/or psychological coercion. Numerous other students have been expelled from universities and/or summoned to court, for merely exercising their constitutional right to freedom of opinion, peaceful assembly, and free speech.



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Re: Student harassment on university campuses

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*Moreover*, in the past few days a number of faculty on university campuses, such as the campuses of the Allameh Tabatabai University in Tehran, have been summarily and arbitrarily dismissed from their posts as part of a coordinated ideological purge being carried out by the authorities. There are clear signs that these purges, which appear to be specifically targeting the faculty in the social sciences and the humanities, are part of a well-orchestrated government policy. It is also feared these are only the beginning of a much more extensive impending wave of purges directed against students and faculty alike, aimed at instilling a regime of fear on university campuses and silencing all dissenting opinions. These recent circumstances have expectedly attracted much international attention and drawn widespread condemnation from concerned academics and scholars around the world (for example: <http://www.payvand.com/news/09/sep/1206.html>).

The ideologically and politically motivated purges by Iranian officials and security forces, the callous murders, and regular brutal and unwarranted beating of student activists by the security forces, along with large-scale intimidation, frequent arrests and torture during detention, and the periodic expulsion of peaceful student activists and dissenting faculty from university campuses throughout the country, have made the abuses of power by the Iranian state and the atmosphere of fear to which students and faculty are subjected on and off the university campuses by far among the most dismal in the world.

Your Excellency, the fact that I am writing to you again within such a short span of time should unequivocally underscore the dire urgency of the situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran and underline our strongest disapproval of such routine violations. MESA again calls on Iranian authorities to implement and guarantee the full rights of academic and intellectual freedom and the right to peaceful assembly on all university campuses. MESA shall continue its rigorous monitoring of developments in Iran, and we hope that Iranian authorities will reverse course and provide solid assurances of respecting and protecting basic rights of freedom of speech, opinion, and scholarship, as well as the right to non-violent assembly, on all Iranian campuses.

Sincerely,

Virginia H. Aksan, PhD

MESA President

Department of History, McMaster University