



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

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Ismail Haniya, Prime Minister
Caretaker Government of the Palestinian Authority

Fax: 202-974-6278

Dear Prime Minister:

We are writing to urge you to use your authority to halt the activities of armed groups that have been engaged in indiscriminate rocket fire against Israeli towns bordering Gaza. We are particularly distressed at the 27 February 2008 bombardment of Sderot, during which around 50 rockets hit the western Negev, with one of them slamming into Sapir College near Sderot and killing Roni Yechiah, a 47-year-old student. According to press reports, your own organization Hamas claimed responsibility for that attack. What we are asking is that you hold this group accountable for its actions and that you make clear to all that such behavior is criminal and will be prosecuted.

The Middle East Studies Association of North America (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 more than 2700 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.

Rockets fired from Gaza have been falling on Israel for some seven years. According to Human Rights Watch, Palestinian rocket attacks on Israel from Gaza and Israeli artillery attacks on populated areas in northern Gaza have been responsible for "hundreds of civilian casualties since September 2005 and constitute serious violations of the laws of war." To endanger the lives of civilians, including students, is not an acceptable response no matter how severe the provocation.

In the past we have on numerous occasions conveyed to the Israeli government our concerns regarding Israeli attacks on Palestinian students, teachers and educational facilities as well as regarding the deleterious effects of the continuing occupation. Most recently, on 6 June 2007 we wrote to express our grave concern about the impact on Palestinian educational institutions of Israel's military bombing campaigns and incursions in the Palestinian territories, the abduction of Minister of Education Dr. Nasser Eddin Shaer (who was subsequently released), as well as the crippling impact of international sanctions against the Hamas-led government.

As the leader of the Palestinian government in effective control of the Gaza strip, we ask that you exercise your authority and that of the government of Gaza to halt attacks that put civilians and civilian institutions, including students and universities, at risk.

Sincerely,

Mervat Hatem
MESA President