

**Middle
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Studies
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of North America, Inc.

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21 October 2010

Professor Moshe Kaveh
President
Bar-Ilan University
Ramat Gan, Israel

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President.office@mail.biu.ac.il

Dear President Kaveh:

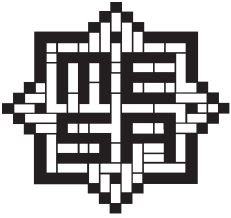
On behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom (CAF) of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA), I write to express our concern about your handling of the tenure case of Dr. Ariella Azoulay. It appears to us that she may have been denied tenure at your university as a result of opaque and improper evaluation procedures and because of her political views, rather than on the basis of her record as a scholar, teacher, and member of her university and academic communities.

MESA was founded in 1966 to promote scholarship and teaching of the Middle East and North Africa. The preeminent organization in the field, MESA publishes the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and has nearly 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 do not dispute a university's right to deny tenure to a faculty member. However, we believe that all tenure and promotion decisions should be made solely on the basis of a fair and impartial assessment of a faculty member's scholarship, teaching, and service to the university and the broader professional community in accordance with generally accepted and transparent procedures. We are concerned that such procedures were not followed in Dr. Azoulay's case and that political considerations may have played a role in the university's decision to deny her tenure.

Dr. Azoulay has published a substantial number of books, journal articles, chapters in edited volumes, and translations; it is fair to say that she is widely regarded as a leading figure in the field of cultural studies in Israel. She is also an experienced teacher and has supervised numerous graduate students. On that basis, Dr. Avi Sagi, the head of Bar-Ilan University's Program for Hermeneutics and Cultural Studies, in 2007 recommended, with the support of his colleagues in the Program, that Dr. Azzoulay be promoted to tenured Associate Professor. A general university committee denied Dr. Azoulay tenure and did not permit any appeal of its decision. In 2008 Dr. Azoulay was again put up for tenure, and again she was denied. Subsequently, a university committee was established to review Dr. Azoulay's case, and this ad hoc committee also denied her tenure and promotion.

Throughout this process, Bar-Ilan University has refused to disclose the bases for these decisions to either Dr. Azoulay or her attorney. At the same time, neither the university's tenure review process nor the composition and procedures of the committees charged



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with evaluating Dr. Azoulay for tenure strike us as sufficiently transparent or as adequately grounded in clear and consistent guidelines. Because Dr. Azoulay has been an outspoken critic of certain Israeli government policies, this lack of transparency creates a basis for concern that political considerations may have been a factor in the university's decision to deny tenure in this case.

Bar-Ilan University regards itself as one of Israel's leading academic institutions; as such, it has a clear responsibility to respect and defend the norms of academic life, including academic freedom and the right of faculty to be assessed on the basis of their professional activity and not their political views. We therefore call on you to promptly review Dr. Azoulay's case and take whatever steps are necessary to be able to assure us that she has been assessed for tenure in accordance with generally accepted, impartial and transparent procedures.

We look forward to receiving your reply.

Sincerely,

Roger M.A. Allen
MESA President
Professor of Arabic and Comparative Literature, University of Pennsylvania