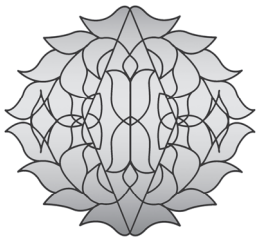


**Middle
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MESA '09

October 26, 2009

Professor Mustafa Idris
President
University of Khartoum
Khartoum, Sudan

Dear President Idris,

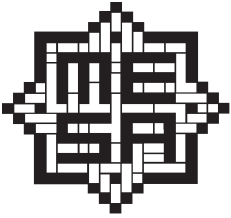
I write on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom (CAF) of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) to protest the procedures followed in the expulsion of two students, Mr. Shams al-Din Muhammad al-Hassan Abbas Shatir and Ms. Rasha Abd al-Hamid Hasan Ali. The expulsion decree, issued by Professor Siddiq Hayati, Vice-President of the University of Khartoum, was entitled "Order of the University President, no. 56 of 2009-Disciplinary" and dated July, 6, 2009.

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 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.

As we understand the facts, they are as follows. Pursuant to an altercation, a guard at the university made a written complaint against Ms. Rasha and Mr. Shams al-Din in which he accused them of improper conduct. A committee formed to investigate the complaint interrogated the students and forwarded the case to a disciplinary committee. However, the disciplinary committee afforded the students no opportunity to explain their side of the case or to defend themselves against the complaint. More important, the committee failed to adhere to explicit provisions in articles 13-16 of the University of Khartoum Law of 1995.

Contrary to Article 14, sections b and e, there was neither a faculty member from the Faculty of Law nor a representative from the Student Union present as members of the Disciplinary Committee. Moreover, contrary to Article 15, section b, the accused students were not permitted to seek advice from an academic advisor, the professor in charge of student housing, a faculty member of their choosing, or a representative of the student union. Even though Professor Ahmad Muhammad Bashir Dijani, from the faculty of law, who serves as a legal advisor to the committee, has objected to the unfairness of the procedures followed and asked that the case against the students be halted, his protest has been ignored. Indeed, the committee's recommendation for expulsion, forwarded to the Dean of Student Affairs, was made after Professor Ahmad had resigned in protest from the committee.

We note, as well, that of the penalties provided for in Article 13 of the University of Khartoum Law of 1995, expulsion is the last and, presumably, most dire. Other penalties provided for in the article and applicable to the case are: an official warning; temporary or permanent suspension from sports, artistic, intellectual or extra-curricular activities; and temporary suspension from education. Given that expulsion is the last penalty indicated, it stands to reason that the Disciplinary Committee must make certain that its decision is fully consonant with all procedural safeguards.



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University of Khartoum President Mustafa Idris
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Finally, we note that contrary to the provision in Article 16 of the University of Khartoum Law of 1995, the students in question have not been allowed to appeal the Disciplinary Committee's decision.

All of these facts indicate clearly that the Disciplinary Committee has failed to respect the University of Khartoum's own legal code and procedural rules. This failure, plus the committee's decision to ignore the complaint of a faculty member whose role on the committee is to ensure that such rules are followed, are what prompt our letter. As a committee of MESA charged with monitoring infringements on academic freedom, CAF members are troubled by the way the disciplinary committee arrived at its recommendation and by its subsequent decision to refuse the students any right of appeal. We urge you, therefore, to ask that the case be considered anew and that all parties be accorded the fair and legal treatment provided for in the University of Khartoum's own regulations.

We look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely yours,

Virginia H. Aksan
President, MESA
Professor, McMaster University