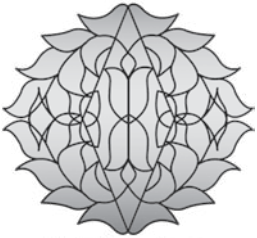


**Middle  
East  
Studies  
Association**  
of North America, Inc.

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**MESA '09**

29 April 2009

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Başbakanlık  
06573 Ankara, Turkey

Via facsimile +90 312 417 0476

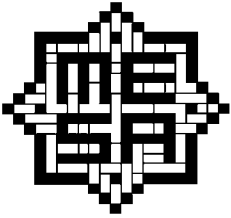
Dear Prime Minister Erdoğan:

I write to you on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) to express our concern regarding a pattern of arrests and detention of university faculty and rectors in connection with the Ergenekon investigation.

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 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 previously sent you letters in 2005 and 2007 regarding the application of Article 301 to deny the right of individuals to freely express nonviolent opinions. In that correspondence we made reference to specific scholars (Orhan Pamuk, Elif Safak, Hrant Dink, Atilla Yayla) as well as to the cancellation of an academic conference to address issues surrounding the Armenian genocide of 1915. With respect to the Ergenekon affair, we are similarly concerned that an atmosphere of intimidation has been generated that is having a chilling effect on academic and intellectual freedom in the Turkish university system.

We are troubled that the most recent wave of detentions and interrogations targeted members of the scholarly community who have been outspoken in their pro-secular views, in particular Professor Mehmet Haberal, rector of Başkent University, Professor Osman Metin Öztürk, rector of Giresun University, former chairman of YOK Professor Kemal Gürüz, former rectors Professor Fatih Hilmioğlu (İnönü University), Professor Ferit Bernay (Samsun University) and Professor Mustafa Yurtkuran (Uludağ University), as well as Professor Erol Manisalı (former lecturer at Istanbul University), Professor Ayşe Yüksel (Yüzüncü Yıl University), and Professor Türkan Saylan (chairwoman of the ÇYDD). In addition to these senior scholars, junior scholars at 19 Mayıs University, Harran University and Dicle University have also been singled out for questioning. All of this gives the appearance of a disturbing pattern of harassment.



**Middle  
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Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan  
29 April 2009  
Re: Ergenekon Investigation  
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As we have communicated to you before, freedom of speech and free expression of ideas are essential to the mission and purpose of higher education. Our association will continue to monitor these disturbing developments, and we hope that your government will uphold the integrity of Turkish universities by ensuring that the right to academic freedom is protected and that scholars are not harassed for opinions they express. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy W. Newhall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Amy W. Newhall  
Executive Director