



REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
ANKARA UNIVERSITY RECTORATE

Sayı : B.30.2.ANK.0.76.00.00/

Ankara

Konu :

Dear Peter Sluglett,
The President of MESA,

21 December 2012

In response to the comments published on your MESA Website and partial information given by your institution to the wider public opinion regarding Ankara University in the section of Letters on Turkey, 12 December 2012, unfortunately emerged a need on our behalf to provide you with a fair and unmisleading account of the situation in which allegations of censorship and violations of academic freedoms about Ankara University were made.

Dear Sluglett, first of all please let us correct the wrong impressions you have about Ankara University administration. Ankara University as one of the leading research and teaching universities in Turkey has held free and fair elections every four years since the early 1980s. We believe that you would not disagree with the fact that, for the majority of university administrations throughout the world this is a quite rare phenomenon. Unlike many western cases, almost the whole academic staff of the university, namely Professors, Associate Professors and Assistant Professors, vote in these elections, and as a rule not only rectors, but also faculty deans and head of departments are elected by their colleagues.

We would like you to know that the current Ankara University administration was one of these administrations elected after a free, democratic and fair election in June 2012. Only after these elections, does the President of Turkish Republic appoint the rectors among from the three candidates who has the highest vote in the elections. After elections, all public university rectors are appointed by the president, contrary to your knowledge, not by the government.

As the incumbent rector of Ankara University I, contrary to the impressions given in your MESA website, am not a government appointed rector in this sense. In fact have I not only got the highest

vote in the recently held election, but also with a remarkably high margin of vote managed to overtake the second candidate, i.e. the former university administration.

The impression given in your letter unfortunately not only reflects MESA administration's lack of information about Turkey's democratic tradition of Rectoral Elections, but also fails to do justice to democratically elected Ankara University administration. We would like to believe that such a misrepresentation and bias is mainly to do with the contacts/sources your board seems to have been misinformed through.

We, as members of Ankara University and Turkish Academia, sincerely believe that free and fair elections in academia are one of the indispensable conditions for academic freedoms and free scholarly research. These are the principles the new administration also unhesitatingly subscribes itself to. The ideal of a democratic, scholarly and meritocratic university cannot be sustained otherwise.

Regarding the other unfortunate allegation that 'free scholarly research at Ankara University has been restricted by every passing day', it suffices for us to say that an objective and impartial eye would only consider these allegations as unfair and unfounded. These allegations reflect the bias, rather than the facts, of those whose disappointment with the election results after free and fair university elections in June 2012.

Regarding the issue about AÇAUM, African Research Centre, and the criticism of censorship, we must say that from the very beginning the University has paid ultimate attention not to take a one-sided and partial stance. The administration instead of prematurely intervening with the disagreements delicately handled the issue and invited the university's standing Ethical Commission to evaluate what appears to be a complicated dispute between the former and new administrations of the African Research Centre.

From the very beginning, the university administration has remained neutral in dealing with the dispute and complaints; and promptly invited Ethical Commission so as not to shadow academic freedoms and the freedom of scholarly research.

Contrary to the claims in your letter, as the standing Ethical Commission were invited to investigate the issue impartially and fairly, the university administration has not felt any urgent need to take

further action. As could be guessed, the members of Ethical Commission are appointed independently and the commission makes its decisions in accordance with scholarly and ethical principles taken by the University Senate. The issue between two sides at AÇAUM, African Research Center, is in the process of a thoroughly investigation.

But unfortunately despite the ultimate attention paid by our university to academic freedoms, administrative procedures and ethical principles, the former AÇAUM administration -without taking the writers' consent and approval- have one-sidedly withdrawn the articles and made the reach to these refereed articles impossible. This is one of the issues that has been investigated by the Ethical Commission too. Besides the whole academic structure of the research centre, all archives and former journal issues are open for academic use and are operational as before.

As you also would appreciate the university administrations are bound with academic procedures, principles and the decisions of standing Ethical Commission and University Constitutions, and without decisions of standing committees any judgement will be premature and unfair. We hope that you would not disagree with these principles on this ground. Having said that it is also our university's natural right to expect the similar fairness and due unbiased approach from all sides, including the MESA administration that you chair, before reaching a judgement which evidently appears to have been made through misleading and one-sided sources of information.

Yours sincerely,



Erkan İBİŞ

Rector, Ankara University