



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

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March 29, 2016

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
Washington, DC
via fax 202-647-1811

Dear Mr. Secretary,

We write to you on behalf of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) and its Committee on Academic Freedom to convey to you our deep concern regarding the grave deterioration in the human rights situation in Egypt and to call on the United States government to seriously consider suspending military and economic aid to the Egyptian government as long as its current assault on human rights activists and organizations, and on the civil liberties of Egyptians in general, persists.

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 nearly 3,000 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 you note in your press statement of March 18, 2016, the Egyptian government has recently re-opened the prosecution of Egyptian non-governmental organizations – initiated in 2012-13 – and has extended it to numerous organizations which receive foreign funding in support of their work monitoring human rights and promoting civil liberties. Directors of these NGOs and their staff have been summoned for interrogation, travel bans have been issued against their personnel, and efforts have been made to shut down organizations without cause. The targeting of these organizations is part of an intensification of efforts by the government to silence free speech, intimidate critical voices, and limit the rights of association and assembly. MESA's Committee on Academic Freedom has, in the past ten weeks, written five letters to the Egyptian government protesting these and related disturbing developments.

While we applaud your statement, we believe that for the views expressed therein to carry weight they must be combined with practical measures. We are alarmed not only that the United States government has recently reinstated aid to Egypt, but that it has



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bypassed certification requirements under US law that would limit assistance if the Egyptian government failed to meet “democracy-based conditions” such as respect for human rights. In our view, continuing to provide military and economic aid to Egypt despite the Egyptian government’s brutal crackdown on advocates of human rights and democracy is equivalent to condoning the crackdown. We urge you to reiterate to the Egyptian authorities that the United States finds such actions unacceptable and that it will not continue to provide military and economic aid to a government that routinely violates its citizens’ basic human rights.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "B. Baron" followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Beth Baron
MESA President
Professor, City University of New York

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy W. Newhall" in a cursive style.

Amy W. Newhall
MESA Executive Director
Associate Professor, University of Arizona