

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

1219 N Santa Rita Ave
The University of Arizona
Tucson AZ 85721 USA

520 621-5850
520 626-9095 fax
mesana@u.arizona.edu
www.mesana.org



MESA '08
November 22-25
Washington, DC

13 June 2008

Michael K. Young, President
Office of The President
John R Park Bldg
201 Presidents Cir Rm 203
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

via fax 801-581-5701

Dear President Young,

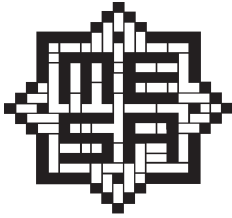
On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA), I write to express our concern about Dean Robert Newman's summary and arbitrary revocation of the appointments held at the University of Utah's Middle East Center by Professors Peter Sluglett and Harris Lenowitz. This incident has unfairly damaged the reputations of two very senior and distinguished scholars and it has also seriously undermined the standing of the Middle East Center and of the University of Utah. We therefore ask that you fully and expeditiously investigate this decision and take appropriate action to remedy the wrong that appears to have been done to Professors Sluglett and Lenowitz.

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. MESA has more than 2800 members worldwide and publishes the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, the preeminent scholarly publication in this field, as well as other journals.

According to the information we have received, Dean Newman has stated that he dismissed Professors Sluglett and Lenowitz because of their alleged "lack of collegiality." He is further reported to have alleged, in a letter that was widely distributed, that Professors Sluglett and Lenowitz had helped create an "intimidating," "unprofessional" and "toxic" atmosphere at the Middle East Center which, he claimed, had led to the departure from the university of five junior center faculty, four of them women. These allegations would seem to have no basis in fact: all reports indicate that there was no "lack of collegiality" at the Middle East Center, and all four of the women faculty to whom Dean Newman alluded have written to him to clarify that neither Professor Sluglett nor Professor Lenowitz contributed in any way to their decisions to leave the University of Utah.

We are also concerned about the arbitrary and high-handed way in which Professors Sluglett and Lenowitz were dismissed and the denial to them of any due process. Neither had received any prior warning about the allegations on whose basis the dean dismissed them; they were dismissed by letter, after Dean Newman had refused to meet them or with their legal representatives; and they were denied an opportunity to appeal the dean's decision before it took effect.

We are aware that dismissal from the governing board of an academic unit is not equivalent to termination: Professors Sluglett and Lenowitz are tenured, and neither their employment status nor their ability to teach or conduct research is at issue. Nonetheless, summary dismissal based on vague and specious allegations – especially those that allude to something close to sexual harassment – can only be hurtful and embarrassing and may cause damage to



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

page 2/Young re: Dean Newman

the reputations, standing and careers of these very distinguished scholars who have for many years been leading figures at the Middle East Center. The fact that the center's director and associate director have both resigned their positions to protest the injustice done to their colleagues indicates that Dean Newman's action has also significantly undermined the functioning and reputation of the Middle East Center and diminished the stature of the University of Utah.

We therefore request that you, and the appropriate university body or bodies, investigate this incident fully and carefully, to ensure that proper procedures were followed, that the due process rights of Professors Sluglett and Lenowitz were not violated, and that all allegations made against them are either supported by solid evidence or withdrawn. We trust that if it is found that Professors Sluglett and Lenowitz were treated unfairly, the university will publicly apologize to them and reinstate them at the Middle East Center.

We look forward to receiving your response to this request.

Sincerely,

Mervat F. Hatem

Mervat F. Hatem
MESA President
Professor of Political Science, Howard University

cc: Peter Sluglett, Harris Lenowitz, Ibrahim Karawan, Peter von Sivers