

**Middle
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Studies
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of North America, Inc.

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June 25, 2010

Professor Dr. Abd al-Aziz Saleh Bin Habtoor
Rector
University of Aden
Aden Governorate
P.O. Box 6312, Yemen
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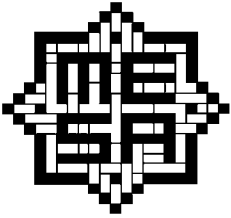
Dear Rector Bin Habtoor,

I write on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom (CAF) of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) to protest the two-year suspension of Mr. Wa'el al-Qubati, a fourth-year student in the Journalism and Mass Communications Faculty at the University of Aden. Mr. al-Qubati was suspended without due process or notification, apparently for writing newspaper articles critical of the university administration. Furthermore, Mr. al-Qubati was prevented from sitting for his final-year exams, despite securing a court ruling compelling the University administration to allow him to sit for the exams. We strongly urge you to reinstate Mr. al-Qubati immediately, and to enable him to take the final-year exams that will determine his educational future.

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 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.

Mr. al-Qubati is an editor at the newspaper *Aden News* and the former secretary of *al-Tahdeeth* newspaper. Faced with the summary suspension, Mr. al-Qubati resorted to the courts. On 15 June 2010, the Sira Primary Court headed by Judge Sadeq Abd Rabbo Muhammad found for the plaintiff, ordering Aden University to admit Mr. al-Qubati to the exams, due to begin on 16 June 2010. When Mr. al-Qubati made his way to the University on 16 June, security guards prevented him from entering, on the orders of the University Rector.

Several Yemeni organizations and institutions have appealed to you, Dr. Bin Habtoor, to respect the court ruling and enable Mr. al-Qubati to take his exams. Minister of Higher Education Saleh Ali Basurra ordered in a memorandum that all suspended students be reinstated, in line with President Ali Abdallah Saleh's amnesty for political prisoners on May 22, the 20th anniversary of Yemeni unification. On 22 June 2010, the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate organized a protest sit-in to express solidarity with



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Mr. al-Qubati, and issued a statement expressing its “opposition to the arbitrary decisions targeting journalists. The University Rector’s refusal of the court ruling ordering al-Qubati’s admission to the exams is a grave matter that cannot pass in silence.”

We join our Yemeni colleagues and strongly urge you to abide by the Sira Court ruling and admit Mr. al-Qubati to the final exams. We also call on you to reverse the punitive, arbitrary suspension order against Mr. al-Qubati and reinstate him so that he can complete his final year of university studies. We respectfully remind you that Article 54 of the Yemeni Constitution stipulates that all citizens have the right to education, guaranteed by the state. And Article 51 of the Constitution emphasizes that every citizen has the right to resort to the courts, to protect his rights and interests.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Roger M.A. Allen
MESA President
Professor of Arabic and Comparative Literature, University of Pennsylvania

cc:

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