



**Middle
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Open letter to the countries participating in Operations 'Decisive Storm' and 'Restoring Hope' and the Ansar Allah regarding armed attacks on Yemeni universities

His Majesty Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, King of Saudi Arabia
The Leadership of Ansar Allah

His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates

His Majesty Shaikh Hamad bin 'Issa Al Khalifa, King of Bahrain

His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Emir of Kuwait

His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar

His Excellency Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt

His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, King of Jordan

His Majesty Mohammed VI, King of Morocco

His Excellency, Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir, President of Sudan

His Excellency Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal

His Excellency Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Your Majesties, Your Highnesses, Your Excellencies,

I write on behalf of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) of North America and its Committee on Academic Freedom regarding the disturbing reports of armed attacks on university campuses in Yemen. Students have been shut out of Yemen's classrooms due to both Saudi-led air attacks as well as Houthi artillery fire for several months, and several campuses have incurred damage. Among the victims of street fighting in Aden have been several academics and students of Aden University. One of them, Professor of Economics Zain al-Yazidi, reportedly died on December 17, 2014, of the effects of tear-gas sprayed at him during a peaceful demonstration.

Hudaydah University, a branch of Sana'a University in the southwest of Yemen, was the target of airstrikes that caused severe damage to the faculty of health sciences and the faculty of pharmacy. Universities in Sanaa, Dhamar, Ibb, and Taiz have suspended most activities to avoid casualties. Students have been forced to stay at home, or have been displaced. Overall, the damage to the universities and the suspension of classes have affected five million students across the country, the majority of them Yemenis, but also foreign nationals studying in the country.

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.

Recent weeks have seen several calls for pauses or ceasefires, none of which have materialized. We call on all parties to the conflict in Yemen to desist immediately from operations that may further damage or destroy educational facilities and to take all necessary steps to protect these places and the people who teach and study there. Should the recent ceasefire proposals be accepted and hold, we then call upon all the parties to assume their responsibilities in helping to rebuild what has been destroyed. Only once the fighting has come to an end and the damage repaired will Yemeni universities be able to resume their mandate of ensuring the free exchange of ideas, and work with the broader society to restore peace, stability, and the country's once vibrant intellectual life.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nathan Brown', is written over a white background.

Nathan Brown

President

Professor, George Washington University

Cc:

President of the United States Barak Obama

Prime Minister of the United Kingdom David Cameron

President of France François Hollande

President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Prime Minister of Belgium Charles Michel