



**Middle  
East  
Studies  
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of North America, Inc.

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February 18, 2014

Adel Abd al-Hameed  
Minister of Justice  
Lazoghly Square, Ministry of Justice  
Cairo  
Arab Republic of Egypt

by fax: 20 2 795 8103  
by e-mail: [mjustice@moj.gov.eg](mailto:mjustice@moj.gov.eg)

Your Excellency,

I write to you on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) to express our strong objection to the recent criminal charge levelled against Dr. Amr Hamzawy, a professor at Cairo University and the American University in Cairo, former parliamentarian, and prominent liberal intellectual, of insulting the Egyptian judiciary in a tweet he posted last June. This baseless charge seems to be part of an emerging pattern of government actions aimed at silencing any expressions of opposition or dissent.

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.

At the beginning of June 2013, an Egyptian court ruled that several Western-backed non-governmental organizations operating in Egypt aimed to “undermine Egypt’s national security and lay out a sectarian, political map that serves United States and Israeli interests” and were receiving funding from outside to pursue that aim. The ruling prompted critical responses from both inside and outside Egypt. Several critics suggested that insufficient evidence had been provided to prove the allegations and so, they appeared to be political in intent. Indeed, this was precisely what Dr. Hamzawy posted in a single tweet on June 5. It reads: “Verdict in case of foreign funding of CS shocking, transparency lacking, facts undocumented & politicization evident.” It is for these words that he is now being accused of insulting the Egyptian judiciary.

We are fully aware that insulting the judiciary is a crime in Egyptian law; however, we fail to see how the above words can be read as defamatory. Instead, the charges against Dr. Hamzawy appear to be part of a broader, systematic effort to stifle critical free expression. Dr. Hamzawy is well-known and well-respected in the academic community as a scholar and intellectual, as a man of principles and integrity. He is deeply committed to Egypt, to liberal and democratic values.

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We therefore urge you to dismiss this baseless charge against Dr. Hamzawy immediately. We further call upon you to uphold and protect, in all instances, the provisions of the 2014 constitution, most notably Article 65, which guarantees freedom of thought and opinion, including expression of opinion through speech. We look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nathan Brown', written in a cursive style.

Nathan Brown  
President

cc:

Dr. Hazem El-Beblawi, Prime Minister (fax: 20 2 795 8048 or 20 2 795 8016)

Dr. Nabil Fahmy, Minister of Foreign Affairs (fax: 20 2 257 67967)

Dr. Hossam Eissa, Minister of Higher Education (fax: 20 2 794 1005)

Maj. Gen. Mohamed Mostafa, Minister of Interior Affairs (fax: 20 2 796 0682)

Dr. Mohamed Fayek, President, National Council on Human Rights (fax: 20 2 376 24852)

Dr. Lisa Anderson, President, American University in Cairo (fax: 20 2 279 57565)