



Middle East Studies Association of North America, Inc.

The University of Arizona · 1232 North Cherry Avenue · Tucson, Arizona 85721

19 October 1995

His Highness Shaikh 'Isa ibn Salman al-Khalifa
The Emir of Bahrain
The Amiri Court, Rifa'a Palace
P. O. Box 555
Manama, Bahrain

FAX 973/668-884

Your Highness:

We write to express our deep concern over the suspension of Dr. Munira Ahmed Fakhro from her teaching position at the University of Bahrain. She was suspended for refusing to retract statements that she and other Bahraini women made in an April 1995 petition calling, among other things, for an end to the use of live ammunition in dispersing demonstrations, the humane and fair treatment of detainees, creating job opportunities, allowing women's participation in public life, and restoring the constitution, parliamentary elections, and respect for freedom of expression and other civil liberties. The same petition unequivocally denounced the use of violence by any side in Bahraini political disputes and expressly rejected the methods of terrorism.

The Middle East Studies Association comprises 2400 academics worldwide who teach and conduct research on the Middle East and North Africa. The association publishes the respected *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and is committed to ensuring respect for the principles of academic freedom and human rights throughout the region.

Dr. Fakhro had been teaching in the fields of sociology, social work and social development at the Department of General Studies at the University of Bahrain since 1987. She is a scholar of international stature who has produced a number of highly regarded studies in her field and has participated in international and regional conferences.

We understand that Dr. Fakhro has been repeatedly asked by government and university officials to withdraw her support for the petition or suffer the penalty of dismissal from her position. She has even been asked to sign a letter of apology renouncing her support for the petition and promising to avoid involvement in political activity. On October 2, the President of the University informed her that she was suspended pending resolution of the issue, with no way for her to appeal this decision. Even more disturbing, we learn that about ninety other women signatories, many of whom have academic positions, have been asked to sign apologies and make promises to cease political activity under pain of losing their jobs if they refused.

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Punishing Dr. Fakhro and other women academics by threatening them with the loss of their academic jobs simply because of their peaceable expression of political opinions constitutes an egregious violation of the principle of academic freedom. Punishing them for views that are fully consonant with the values of human rights and the rule of law is particularly shocking. It is also a breach of human rights, such as the guarantee of freedom of expression and the proclamation in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that all "shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms."

We respectfully urge that Dr. Fakhro be immediately reinstated in her teaching position, and that there be an end to all use of threats to stifle academic freedom and throttle the peaceable expression of political opinion and support for human rights.

Respectfully,



Anne H. Betteridge
Executive Director

cc: His Excellency Shaikh Muhammad ibn Khalifa al-Khalifa, Prime Minister
Ambassador Dr. Muhammed Abdel-Ghaffar, Ambassador to the United States
Warren Christopher, United States Secretary of State
Malcolm Rifkind, Foreign Minister of the United Kingdom