

## Middle East Studies Association of North America

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16 September 1991

His Excellency Hosni Mubarak  
President of the Republic  
Aruba Palace  
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt

Your Excellency:

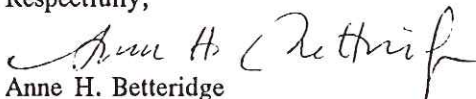
The Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association is deeply concerned about your government's decision to dissolve the Arab Women's Solidarity Association, by decree of the Deputy Governor of Cairo, dated 15 June 1991. The Middle East Studies Association comprises 2200 academics worldwide who teach and conduct research on the Middle East and North Africa. The association publishes the respected International Journal of Middle East Studies. The Association is committed to ensuring respect for academic freedom throughout the region.

The Arab Women's Solidarity Association (AWSA) has played an important role in Egypt and internationally by promoting research and hosting conferences that bring together Arab and foreign scholars to examine critical issues related to the status of women in the Arab world. The activities of AWSA have received financial support from private and intergovernmental sources, including the United Nations, the Canadian Embassy, Oxfam and the Ford Foundation. The Foreign Ministry had authorized AWSA to hold its Third International Conference in November 1991 in Cairo, with funding from the World Bank, in order to assess issues of women and development in the Arab world. Moreover, the founder and president of AWSA, Dr. Nawal al-Saadawi, is an internationally renowned author, who has lectured frequently at universities abroad.

We respectfully request that your government reconsider the decision to close AWSA. Egypt has ratified and is bound by the international covenant on civil and political rights, which provides for the right of freedom of association in Article 22. Moreover, Article 47 of the Egyptian Constitution guarantees freedom of opinion and the right to publicize views verbally and in writing. We fear that the closure of AWSA will contribute to restricting intellectual freedom and freedom of association in Egypt.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

  
Anne H. Betteridge  
Executive Director

cc: Osama al-Baz, Advisor to the President, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Egypt  
Amr Mousa, Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs  
Dr. Amal Othman, Minister of Social Affairs  
Ambassador El-Sayed Abdel Raouf el-Reedy  
Ambassador Robert Pelletreau