



# Middle East Studies Association of North America, Inc.

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May 22, 1997

His Excellency Hosni Mubarak  
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt  
c/o Excellency Ahmed Maher El Sayed  
Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt  
3521 International Court, NW  
Washington, DC 20008

Your Excellency:

The Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association wishes to express its concern for the arrest and preventative detention of Dr. Ahmad al-Ahwaney, professor of Nuclear Energy at Cairo University. According to our information, Dr. al-Ahwaney was first arrested on April 24, 1997, and held in preventative detention for 15 days. This detention was renewed for another 15 days on May 6, 1997, and Dr. al-Ahwaney continues to be held at Isteqbal Tora prison.

The Middle East Studies Association comprises 2600 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.

According to our information, Dr. al-Ahwaney has been accused of preparing documents for distribution that would, if distributed, destabilize public order or damage public interests. Dr. al-Ahwaney has denied these charges and has asserted that he received the documents by post, while the actual documents are nothing but a bulletin criticizing the new law on agricultural land allowing landowners to evict tenants after a certain period of grace. As of now, no formal charges against Dr. al-Ahwaney have been made.

It is our view that Dr. al-Ahwaney has been accused with something that constitutes normal practice of the right to access information and hold opinions in accordance with Article 19 of the ICCPR and Article 49 of the Egyptian constitution, which states that "The State shall guarantee for citizens the freedom of scientific research and literary, artistic, and cultural creativity." As such his arrest constitutes a serious breach of his academic freedom.

We respectfully urge that you review Dr. al-Ahwaney's case and move either to release him or to clarify and make formal the charges on which he continues to be detained. We also request that you ensure that his detention is not based on his exercise of rights and freedoms that accord with the principle of academic freedom and those that are guaranteed under international human rights law.

Sincerely,

Anne H. Betteridge  
Executive Director

cc: His Excellency Farouq Sayf al-Nasr, Minister of Justice  
Mr. Walid el-Guindy, State Security Prosecutor's Office  
His Excellency Dr. Hussein Kamel Baha'eddin, Minister of Education  
Chancellor Dr. Mufid Shehab, Cairo University  
Ms. Naela Gabr, Human Rights Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
His Excellency Muhammad C. Chabane, Permanent Representative of Egypt to the European Union  
His Excellency Mohamed Shaker, Ambassador, London, England  
U.S. Assistant Secretary of State John Shattuck, Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs  
The Honorable Edward Walker, Jr., U.S. Ambassador, Cairo, Egypt