



**Middle
East
Studies
Association**
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His Excellency Hosni Mubarak
President
Republic of Egypt

By facsimile: 011-202-390-1998

Your Excellency:

The Committee on Academic Freedom in the Middle East and North Africa (CAF MENA) of the Middle East Studies Association of North America is writing to express its deep concern over the July 29 re-conviction of Professor Saad Eddin Ibrahim and his associates at the research institute he directs, the Ibn Khaldun Center. Dr. Ibrahim, Nadia Abdel Nur, Magda Ali and Mohamed Hassanein have received prison sentences ranging from two to seven years and are currently incarcerated. We urge you to take all necessary steps to secure their immediate release from prison pending further appeals of the July 29 decision of the Supreme State Security Court. We further call on your government to rescind the orders closing the Ibn Khaldun Center, a respected and renowned independent research and public policy institute.

The Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) comprises 2700 academics worldwide who teach and conduct research on the Middle East and North Africa, and is the preeminent professional association in the field. The association publishes the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, and is committed to ensuring respect for principles of academic freedom and freedom of expression in the region and in connection with the study of the region.

In November 2001, MESA's Board of Directors awarded Dr. Ibrahim the inaugural MESA Academic Freedom Award in recognition of his "dedication to the promotion of democratic rights and civil liberties through his teaching and scholarship, and his commitment as a public intellectual to the principles of free expression and free exchange of information and ideas" as well as his "tireless advocacy of fundamental rights for all Egyptians."

This letter follows two earlier letters from CAF MENA, on July 11, 2000 and May 31, 2001, protesting this case. We again must voice our deep distress both at the manner in which the trial was conducted by the Supreme Security Court and the unduly harsh sentences imposed on Professor Ibrahim and his colleagues. The conduct of the Court and its verdicts confirm the essentially political nature of this case. As a committed public intellectual, Professor Ibrahim has appeared at countless conferences discussing Egypt's development, and its political and social dilemmas, yet he and his associates are now in prison for "tarnishing Egypt's image abroad." Egypt has a long and distinguished tradition of producing intellectuals and writers who produce articles and books brimming with articulate ideas and thought-provoking debate. It is distressing that the government of Egypt is now imprisoning one of these same distinguished citizens and his colleagues.

The results of this trial undermine Egypt's standing in the international community and its reputation as a state committed to the rule of law. The Court's summary and immediate proclamation of a verdict and sentence in a case begun four months earlier after only 15 minutes of review is particularly appalling and raises question about the integrity and intentions of the Supreme State Security Court. This judicial conduct impugns the reputation of Egypt's typical sound standards of judicial review and due process.

We consider it a matter of greatest urgency that your government permit the immediate release of Dr. Ibrahim and his colleagues from prison, pending any appeals process. In particular, we are concerned about the deteriorating medical conditions of Dr. Ibrahim and appeal to the government for a medical release on humanitarian grounds. We further call on your government to foster conditions in which such voices and research can thrive in order for the process of democratic reform in Egypt to move forward, in accordance with its commitments under international law. This must include respect for the rights of academic researchers to undertake activities in support of peaceful political reform.

In these disturbing times of international violence and terrorism, public intellectuals and researchers like Dr. Ibrahim and his associates who are committed to the rule of law, democracy, and freedom of expression must be allowed to flourish rather than to be condemned to prison.

Respectfully yours,

Amy W. Newhall
Executive Director

cc: His Excellency Ambassador Nabil Fahmy, Washington, DC
U.S. Ambassador to Egypt, David C. Welch
Maj-Gen Habib Ibrahim el-Adly, Minister of the Interior
His Excellency Farouq Mahmoud Seif el-Nasr, Minister of Justice