

19 June 2009

Professor Virginia H. Aksan
MESA President
Middle East Studies Association of North America Inc
1219 N Santa Rita Ave
University of Arizona
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By Fax: ++1 520 626 9095

Dear Professor Aksan,

Allow me to express my sincere thanks to the Committee on Academic Freedom of the MESA of North America for your letter of encouragement and praise in the wake of Tel Aviv University's rigorous upholding of academic freedom in the matter of student Omar Barghouti.

Pluralism is a central tenet of Tel Aviv University, a doctrine forming the basis of its very existence and its societal role. Hence, the diversity of racial and ethnic or cultural groups is accepted, and it is on academic criteria, not on political viewpoint, that a student's standing is determined.

It is against this background that we object to the unjust and unwarranted imposition of an academic boycott against Israel's universities, particularly against a liberal university such as ours which, as you have stated, defends the values of academic freedom. Such a boycott, threatening the continued academic work of thousands of professors and students, would serve to undo much of what we have accomplished in upholding the democratic values of liberal tolerance. It would be counter-productive and more allied to the hate propaganda of a number of radicals that have permeated academic and in doing so undermine society rather than engage in pursuit of knowledge and academic discussion of all issues, including controversial ones.

We are appreciative of your praise for our endeavors. In the same spirit that you have spoken out in the interests of one student, we trust you will act to support Israeli universities against these ongoing boycott efforts.

Sincerely,
Zvi Galil

cc: Prof Dany Leviatan, Rector