

Middle East Studies Association of North America, Inc.

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

31 January 1996

Honorable President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani
Tehran
Iran

Your Excellency:

The Committee on Academic Freedom in the Middle East and North Africa of the Middle East Studies Association wishes to express its grave concern over the recent infringement of Dr. Abdul-Karim Soroush's academic freedom.

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.

According to recent reports, Dr. Soroush, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Tehran and a member of the Iranian Academy of Science, was physically attacked and threatened with serious harm on October 11, 1995 by a group at the University of Tehran, where he was to deliver a lecture on mysticism to students at their invitation. He experienced a similar disruption of a lecture at the University of Isfahan in July, 1995. We have seen a letter signed by almost 300 individuals in Iran; the letter appears to threaten Professor Soroush for carrying out his scholarship and teaching. We fear that the situation will deteriorate to the point that he will be forced to suspend all teaching and publication.

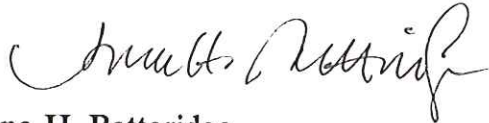
As scholars, we are seriously concerned by these examples of infringement of the academic freedom of one of our colleagues. Moreover, the pattern of threats and intimidation gives us reason to fear for Professor Soroush's safety and even for his life. We respectfully urge the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to investigate these incidents and to take all measures necessary to ensure that they are not repeated, and that Iranian academics can lecture and teach without fear of being interrupted and menaced by hooligans. We also urge that those involved in criminal assaults on Professor Soroush be apprehended and prosecuted for threatening his life and safety.

The membership of our organization also asks that the Iranian government lift the ban on Dr. Soroush's normal scholarly activities of teaching and publishing, and that it ensure

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his personal safety as he conducts these activities. We respectfully request that this letter receive a response so that we will be informed of measures taken to correct this unfortunate situation.

Respectfully,



Anne H. Betteridge
Executive Director

cc: Dr. Kharazi, Iranian Mission to the United Nations
Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamene'i
Dr. Mohammed Reza 'Aref, Dean of Tehran University
Dr. Golpayegani, Ministry of Higher Education
Dr. MirSalim, Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance
Dr. Shariatmadari, Head, Academy of Science