



Middle East Studies Association of North America

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Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir
Office of the Prime Minister
3 Kaplan Street
Kiryat Ben Gurion
Jerusalem 91919
Israel

Your Excellency:

The Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association is deeply concerned that the closure of the six universities on the West Bank and Gaza Strip was extended on 31 May 1990 for an additional three months. We welcome the reopening of several community colleges and of al-Quds University's College of Medical Sciences. However, we remain concerned that the most significant and essential institutions of higher education have been closed since January 1988. Their nearly 14,000 students have lost almost three academic years' study and their libraries, laboratories and offices are inaccessible to faculty and staff for research and curriculum planning.

The Middle East Studies Association is the professional association that comprises 2000 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*.

In November 1988, the members present at the Association's business meeting in Los Angeles adopted a sense-of-the-meeting resolution that underlined the importance of academic freedom throughout the Middle East and noted that the closure of universities precludes all possibility for academic freedom to flourish. The resolution affirmed: "MESA members therefore strongly urge that the universities in the West Bank and Gaza be reopened as soon as possible under conditions that will allow students and professors to return to their legitimate scholarly pursuits."

The Committee on Academic Freedom urges you to cancel the order closing the universities and permit them to reopen forthwith, so that they may resume their vital roles as educational and research centers for the Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

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

Respectfully,

Anne H. Betteridge
Executive Secretary

AHB/nd

cc: Shmuel Goren, Coordinator of Activities in the Territories
Ambassador Moshe Arad, Embassy of Israel, Washington, DC
Ambassador William Brown, Embassy of the United States of America
John Hirsch, Israel Desk, US Department of State
Dr. Michael Van Dusen, House Committee on International Relations
Philip Wilcox, US Consul General, Jerusalem, Israel
Senator Nancy Kassebaum (Kansas), US Senate
Representative Howard Nielson (Utah), House of Representatives