



Middle East Studies Association of North America, Inc.

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

11 March 1996

Brigadier General Shaul Mofaz
Commander of the West Bank
Birzeit, West Bank
Israel

FAX: 972-2-997-7326

Dear Brigadier General Mofaz:

The Committee on Academic Freedom in the Middle East and North Africa (CAF MENA) of the Middle East Studies Association of North America has learned that early on the morning of February 12 Israeli military authorities imposed a closure on the Ramallah/al-Bireh district, blocking all movement in and out of the area and closing the road between Ramallah and Birzeit. As a result, some 3,000 students, faculty, and staff of Birzeit University living in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas experienced severe difficulties in reaching the university. As a consequence of a student protest against the closure that morning, there was a violent clash between the army and students, during which one student was clubbed and arrested.

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.

The CAF MENA wishes to express its deep concern about this latest case of the Israeli military authorities' infringement of the rights of Palestinian students to receive an education, and of academic staff and faculty to carry out their academic duties. It also deplores the severe impairment that such actions cause to the academic functions and activities of Birzeit University. It draws your attention to the fact that the closure of areas is a form of collective punishment and hence a violation of Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

We respectfully call for a cessation of measures that effectively bar Palestinian students from access to university education. Further, we urge the Israeli military authorities to refrain from any further imposition of collective punishments which would restrict

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the access of Birzeit University students, faculty, and staff to the university and thereby disrupt the educational process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Anne H. Betteridge".

Anne H. Betteridge
Executive Director

cc: Brigadier General Ilan Shiff, Judge Advocate General
Colonel Moshe Rosenberg, Legal Adviser for the Central Command
Daivd Liba'i, Minister of Justice
Judge Yosef Harish, Attorney General
Ambassador Itamar Rabinovich