

Middle East Studies Association of North America, Inc.

The University of Arizona • PO Box 210410 • Tucson AZ 85721-0410

18 July 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 of the Middle East Studies Association is concerned about the case of Birzeit student Ahmad Ibrahim Said, who was ordered to administrative detention for one year on July 4, 1996. We are perturbed that Birzeit students seem to have been the targets of arbitrary arrests and detentions both by Israel and by the Palestinian Authority, to which we are writing to protest the arrests of ten Birzeit students in March.

The Middle East Studies Association comprises 2600 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.

We understand that this student was arrested by the Israeli military on May 14, 1996, and that he was held for interrogation in Ashkelon Prison, where he was subjected to a variety of coercive measures, including sleep deprivation, position abuse, and prolonged isolation. According to reports, he is now being detained in Megiddo Prison, a location in Israel that would make it very difficult for his family from Nablus to visit him.

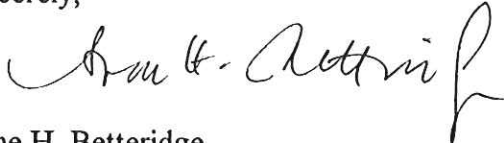
Detaining a person without charges and without an opportunity to contest the grounds for the detention before an independent tribunal is already a deviation from norms of due process. When the detention is as protracted as a full year, the seriousness of the deviation is aggravated. When coercive interrogation techniques are employed to break the will of a person subjected to such arbitrary and protracted incarceration, the human rights violations become a matter of grave concern. When isolation in a location that may preclude family visits is added to this situation, the harms to the victim will accumulate.

We respectfully urge an immediate end to the practice of using protracted administrative detention to lock up persons who are denied the chance to challenge the legality of their incarceration, and who are

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afforded no opportunity to prove their innocence in a public trial. We also call for a cessation of coercive measures during the interrogation of detainees and, when incarceration has been imposed after a fair trial, we urge an end to the practice of assigning them to prisons in locations far from their homes or where family visits will be very difficult to carry out.

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