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Middle East Studies Association of North America, Inc.

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

21 January 1998

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu
Office of the Prime Minister
3 Kaplan Street
Hakirya, Jerusalem 91007 (via Israel)

FAX: 972/2-653-5178 or 972/3-697-7839

Dear Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu:

The Committee on Academic Freedom in the Middle East and North Africa (CAF MENA) is writing to express its deep concern about the case of a Palestinian student from Birzeit University, Fuad Abed Qur'an, who is being held without access to legal counsel. Our concern is intensified by the decision of the Israel High Court of Justice to permit his continued detention and subjection to interrogation methods that clearly constitute torture.

The Middle East Studies Association comprises 2700 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 principles of academic freedom and human rights throughout the region.

According to our information, Mr. Qur'an was arrested on December 10, 1997 by the General Security Services (GSS) on the suspicion of membership in HAMAS. He has been in GSS custody since that time, denied any right to meet with his attorneys. On December 25, Advocates Leah Tsemel and Allegra Pacheco filed a petition on Mr. Qur'an's behalf in the name of the Public Committee against Torture in Israel (PCATI), requesting that the High Court intervene in his case and bring an end to the use of torture during his interrogation. In response, a closed session hearing was held during which Mr. Qur'an, unrepresented by counsel, testified about his conditions. PCATI filed an additional petition requesting information about the particular methods being used on Mr. Qur'an, in response to which the Court took the step of calling a session with nine judges to discuss the methods of interrogation in this case. The decision taken on January 7, 1998 was five-to-four to permit continued use of torture on Mr. Qur'an, including prolonged sleep deprivation, hooding with a dirty sack, and tying him in painful positions for prolonged periods (i.e. "shabah").

In addition, on January 13, the Israeli military court in Jerusalem renewed an order preventing the Birzeit University attorney, Elia Theodory, from meeting with Mr. Qur'an. This is the third extension of the initial prevention order.