



**Middle
East
Studies
Association**
of North America, Inc.

1957 E Street NW, Suite 401
Washington, DC 20052

Phone 520-333-2577

Fax 520-207-3166

caf@mesana.org

mesana.org



13 August 2020

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

Fax: +972-2-5664838

pm_eng@pmo.gov.il

Minister of Education Yoav Galant

Fax: +972-2-5602390

yoavg@knesset.gov.il

Minister of Higher Education Ze'ev Elkin

Fax: +972-2-2649438

zelkin@knesset.gov.il

Minister of Justice Avi Nissenkorn

Fax: +972-2-6285438

mancal@justice.gov.il

Minister of Culture and Sports Yehiel Tropper

Fax: +972-2-3452334

Pniyot_ts@most.gov.il

Minister of the Interior Aryeh Machluf Deri

Fax: +972-2-6703733

sar@moin.gov.il

Ambassador David Melech Friedman

US Ambassador to Israel

Fax: +972-2-6242560

Mayor Moshe Lion

Municipality of Jerusalem

% Ido Rosenberg, Secretary of the Municipality:

ido@jerusalem.muni.il

Dear Prime Minister, Ministers, Ambassador, and Mayor,

We write to you on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) to urge you to halt the harassment of Suhail Khoury, Rania Elias, Daoud al-Ghoul, and other Palestinian educational and cultural workers in Jerusalem. This persistent harassment not only affects the individuals themselves, but also obstructs the cultural and educational life of thousands of Palestinians in Jerusalem.

MESA was founded in 1966 to promote scholarship and teaching on the Middle East and North Africa. The preeminent organization in the field, MESA publishes the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and has over 2,500 members worldwide. MESA is committed to ensuring academic freedom of expression, both within the region and in connection with the study of the region in North America and elsewhere.

On 22 July 2020, Israeli security forces raided the offices of the Yabous

Cultural Center and the Jerusalem Society for Music Education/National Music Conservatory. Property was damaged, and files were ransacked and seized. Concurrently, Israeli authorities arrested Rania Elias, director of the Yabous Cultural Center, and Suhail Khoury, a director of the National Music Conservatory, at their home. Also arrested was Daoud al-Ghoul who, until recently, was director of the Jerusalem Arts Network, Shafaq. While Khoury and Elias were released twelve hours later and al-Ghoul was given a “conditional release” after six days in detention, these attacks on Palestinians in Jerusalem are part of the long-standing hostility of Israeli authorities toward Palestinian cultural institutions in occupied East Jerusalem.

Furthermore, these attacks follow a pattern of Israeli restrictions on Palestinian cultural activities in East Jerusalem, aimed at limiting not only Palestinian cultural expression, but the Palestinians’ very presence in Jerusalem. Daoud al-Ghoul himself has been the target of Israeli harassment on numerous occasions. In addition to his repeated arrests, on 30 November 2014 he was banned from Jerusalem and the West Bank for six months, which was then extended to a year.

These arrests of prominent Palestinian cultural figures in Jerusalem coincide with an ongoing assault on Palestinian civic and education institutions, and persistent arbitrary arrests and detentions of educators and students. We have written to you about our growing concern over these repeated arrests several times in the last 18 months (see letters dated [19 June 2020](#), [11 May 2020](#), [24 September 2019](#), [11 April 2019](#), [22 January 2019](#)), including the arrest of Dr. Imad Barghouti of Al-Quds University on [30 July 2020](#).

The most recent arrests on 22 July violate the basic rights of Suhail Khoury, Rania Elias, and Daoud al-Ghoul. As an occupying power, Israel is bound by the Fourth Geneva Convention to inform individuals of the reason for their arrest, as well as to facilitate a speedy and fair trial. These arrests are violations of the freedom of expression of Palestinian residents in East Jerusalem as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. We urge you to halt all arbitrary arrests and detentions of Palestinian educational and cultural workers in Jerusalem, return any and all illegally seized property, and cease the ongoing harassment of Palestinian cultural institutions in the city.

We await your response.

Sincerely,



Dina Rizk Khoury
MESA President
Professor, George Washington University



Re: Ongoing harassment of cultural and educational workers in occupied East Jerusalem

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Laurie Brand'.

Laurie Brand

Chair, Committee on Academic Freedom

Professor, University of Southern California

European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine (ECCP)

Michael Lynk, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the
Palestinian territories

James Heenan, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights,
Ramallah

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, MENA section

Noha Bawazir, Head of Office and UNESCO Representative, UNESCO Liaison
Office, Ramallah

Palestinian delegation to UNESCO

Viktor Almqvist, Press Officer - Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) and
Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) - European Parliament