



Middle East Studies Association of North America

1232 N. Cherry Ave.
University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona 85721
(602) 621-5850 • FAX (602) 321-7752

January 10, 1992

His Highness Shaikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah
Amir
Kuwait City, Kuwait

Your Excellency:

The Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association has been delighted to learn that the University of Kuwait reopened on 28 September 1991 with a student enrollment of 9,000. We recognize that the task of reequipping the university, including the library, laboratories and computer center, was substantial and applaud the determination that enabled the staff and faculty to persevere in their effort.

The Middle East Studies Association comprises 2200 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. The Association is committed to ensuring respect for academic freedom throughout the region.

Last year, we wrote to the President of Iraq expressing our dismay at the dismissal and intimidation of Kuwait faculty and staff and the removal of equipment and books from the university campuses. A copy of that letter is enclosed for your information.

Despite our relief that the university has reopened, we have been concerned to learn that non-Kuwaiti students were excluded from studying in the fall semester of 1991. We understand that they were barred from pursuing their studies solely on the grounds of their non-Kuwaiti nationality. We have learned that this policy was even applied to students who were already enrolled and in good standing at the university. Such a policy affects most seriously members of the biduun community and Palestinians with Egyptian travel documents, who would face difficulty obtaining the necessary visas and travel documents to enable them to study at universities outside Kuwait. We have obtained the names of 104 Palestinians with Egyptian travel documents who could not continue their studies and of another 30 who had been admitted to the university but were prevented from beginning their studies.

We respectfully call your attention to the fact that such a policy violates principles of international human rights. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provides in Article 13.2.c. that higher education shall be made equally available to all, on the basis of capacity. Article 2 provides that the rights in the Covenant "will be exercised without discrimination of any kind as to...national or social origin."

We strongly urge you to allow all qualified non-Kuwaiti students to continue their studies at Kuwait University, preferably by the beginning of the spring semester of 1992. Allowing them to resume their academic studies will contribute to the process of restoring a healthy intellectual and academic atmosphere in the wake of the devastating war.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Anne H. Betteridge
Executive Director

cc: Shaikh Sa'ad al-'Abdallah al-Sabah, Crown Prince
Mr. Hammud al-Jaber al-Sabah, Minister of the Interior
Mr. Ghazi al-Sammar, Minister of Justice
Ambassador Ghanem, U.S. Embassy of Kuwait