



# Middle East Studies Association of North America, Inc.

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30 April 1996

President Yasser Arafat  
Palestinian Authority  
Al-Muntada  
Gaza, Palestinian Authority

Fax: 011 972 7 822 365

Dear President Arafat:

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 on March 30 of this year a large number of Palestinian security forces raided Al-Najah University in Nablus, fired their weapons in the air, and shot tear gas at students in Nablus, wounding two (along with ten non-students attending the occasion). This incident occurred during a press conference organized by students to draw attention to the number of students imprisoned by both the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli authorities. According to our information, about 70 students are currently imprisoned.

In addition, we have been informed that a Birzeit University student has been detained without charges since March 8. The student, Adeeb Muhammad Ziadeh, has been allowed only one visit with his family and has otherwise been held incommunicado. According to reports, he has been severely mistreated during his detention and tortured during interrogation - without ever having access to a judicial proceeding to test the justification for his arrest and detention or the chance to consult a lawyer.

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.

The CAF MENA wishes to express its deep concern about this invasion of a university of 7000 students by Palestinian security forces. This action creates a climate of intimidation and an environment ill-suited to the free exchange of ideas. It has a chilling effect upon the faculty and is inimical to academic freedom.

We respectfully call for a full official investigation into the incident at al-Najah, with public release of its results and the adoption of a policy supportive of academic freedom.

President Yasser Arafat  
April 25, 1996

We also urge an immediate inquiry into the case of the detention and possible mistreatment of Adeeb Muhammad Ziadeh. Further, we call for the responsible authorities to cease arbitrary arrests of students and academics and to release those who remain in detention without being formally charged of criminal offenses in judicial proceedings consonant with due process.

Sincerely,



Anne H. Betteridge  
Executive Director

cc: Sa'eb Erekat, Minister of Local Government Affairs  
Khaled al-Qidrah, Attorney General  
Tawfiq al-Tarawi, Head of Security (Mukhabarat)  
Iyad Al-Sarraj, Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizen's Rights