



Middle East Studies Association of North America, Inc.

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5 May 1998

Mr. Fayez Abu-Rahmeh
Attorney General
Palestinian Authority
Attorney General's Building
Yarmouk, Gaza

FAX: 972/7-824503

Dear Mr. Abu-Rahmeh:

The Committee on Academic Freedom in the Middle East and North Africa (CAF MENA) of the Middle East Studies Association is alarmed at the case of Birzeit student Ghassan Abdul al-Addassi, who was arrested by the Palestinian Preventive Security Service on March 29, 1998 at his home in el-Bireh. Reliable reports indicate that Mr. al-Addassi's fundamental human rights in regard to conditions of detention and the prompt bringing of legal charges are not being respected.

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.

Mr. al-Addassi's case is of particular concern to CAF MENA, as it comes amid continued reports of students at Palestinian institutions of higher education being subject to violations of their fundamental human rights by the security organs of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Mr. al-Addassi's family and lawyer have been unable to confirm the reasons for Mr. al-Addassi's arrest; requests by Mr. al-Addassi's lawyer to visit his client have been denied; and Mr. al-Addassi has not been brought before a court and formally charged with a crime. Together, this amounts to a gross abuse of Mr. al-Addassi's internationally guaranteed legal rights. Moreover, his family is concerned about the conditions under which he has been detained, as there have been previous reports of students subjected to torture when detained in analogous circumstances.

It is to the Palestinian Authority's credit that its President, Yasser Arafat, has publicly committed the PA to ratifying at the earliest possible occasion the major international human rights covenants. It is also notable that the PA's draft Basic Law affirms the PA's commitment to incorporating the principles of these covenants into Palestinian municipal law. It is, therefore, particularly disturbing that the PA security services continue to violate the spirit and letter of international provisions as well as those of Palestinian municipal law. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, for example, affirms that no one shall be subject to arbitrary arrest or detention and that anyone who is arrested shall be informed at the time of their arrest of the reasons for their arrest and of formal charges which they face. It also guarantees a prompt appearance before a court authorized by law to exercise judicial power and decide without delay on the lawfulness of the detention and, should

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criminal charges be brought, a fair and public hearing without delay before a properly constituted court of law (articles 9, 10, and 14).

CAF MENA would, therefore, urge that Mr. al-Addassi be granted immediate access to his lawyer, that he be released or informed of the cause of his detention and formally charged in front of an ordinary criminal court, and that if he is so charged that he be granted all appropriate guarantees of a fair trial. More broadly, CAF MENA would respectfully suggest that it is in the moral, political, and legal interest of the PA and its citizens that the PA abide by the provisions of international law in respect to all human rights and, most specifically, those which relate to the establishment of a state on the basis of the rule of law.

Respectfully yours,



Anne H. Betteridge
Executive Director

cc: Mr. Yasser Arafat, President, Palestinian Authority
Col. Jibril Rajoub, Head of Palestinian Preventive Security Service
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