

August 9, 2002

Shaikh Ahmad Yassin
Spiritual Leader
Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)
Gaza

By fax: +972 8 286 6990

Dear Shaikh Yassin,

The Committee on Academic Freedom in the Middle East and North Africa (CAF MENA) of the Middle East Studies Association of North America is writing to condemn in the strongest terms the bomb attack of July 31 in Jerusalem's Hebrew University, claimed by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), which killed seven students and injured more than seventy. This attack, by targeting civilians, violated the most elemental principle of international humanitarian law. Furthermore, by targeting a university, the Islamic Resistance Movement grievously assaulted the academic freedom of Hebrew University students and their ability to exercise their right to exchange and receive information without putting themselves at risk of death or serious injury.

The Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) comprises 2700 academics worldwide who teach and conduct research on the Middle East and North Africa, and is the preeminent professional association in the field. The association publishes the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, and is committed to ensuring respect for the principles of academic freedom and freedom of expression in the region and in connection with the study of the Middle East and North Africa.

CAF MENA has frequently criticized Israeli violations of the academic freedom of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip during and prior to the current uprising against the military occupation, most recently in a letter of July 22, 2002, to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Hamas spokespersons have attempted to justify this and other recent suicide bombings as retaliation and reprisal for Israeli attacks that have killed Palestinian civilians. However, under international humanitarian law, the absolute prohibition against targeting civilians includes acts of reprisal. This prohibition is categorical, and applies to attacks committed by armed opposition groups as well as government security forces.

We urge you to call publicly and unequivocally on the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, the military wing of your organization, to desist immediately and unconditionally from any attacks or acts of reprisal that deliberately target civilians.

Sincerely,

Amy W. Newhall
Executive Director