



Middle East Studies Association

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Middle East Scholars Give 2019 Academic Freedom Award to Homa Hoodfar

(November 20, 2019 – New Orleans, LA) The Middle East Studies Association of North America has awarded its 2019 Academic Freedom Award to anthropologist Dr. Homa Hoodfar.

MESA made the Academic Freedom Award presentation on November 15, 2019 at an awards ceremony held during its 53rd annual meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Laurie Brand, Chair of the Committee on Academic Freedom (CAF), on presenting the award, stated:

“Professor Hoodfar’s work largely centers around gender and family issues with a particular focus on Afghanistan, Egypt, Iran, and Pakistan. Additionally, she diligently advocates for women in the region to play a greater role in the political arena and have better representation throughout their national governments.

“In 2016, she traveled to Iran to visit family and access the archives of the country’s parliamentary library. On the day before her scheduled departure, she was picked up by security forces and charged under an umbrella term of ‘dabbling in feminism’. Consequentially, she spent the next four months incarcerated and was regularly interrogated about her publications on increasing women’s participation in politics.

“It was during this period where she had the time to reflect on the significance of people being able to conduct their own studies autonomously.

“We want to commend Homa for her tireless efforts in educating groups and individuals around the world about the importance of academic freedom. Through her numerous speeches, she has sparked an ongoing conversation about the best approaches for integrating this concept, one where scholars are able to openly conduct research without repercussions from external forces, in places where authoritarian regimes reign the hardest.”

The Middle East Studies Association (MESA) is a non-profit learned society that brings together scholars, educators and those interested in the study of the region from all over the world. From its inception in 1966 with 51 founding members, MESA has increased its membership to 2,700 individuals and serves as an umbrella organization for nearly sixty institutional members and thirty-nine affiliated organizations.

The Committee on Academic Freedom (CAF) seeks to foster the free exchange of knowledge as a human right and to inhibit infringements on that right by government restrictions on scholars. The United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provide the principal standards by which human rights violations are identified today. Those rights include the right to education and work, freedom of movement and residence, and freedom of association and assembly.