



## Middle East Studies Association of North America, Inc.

The University of Arizona · 1232 North Cherry Avenue · Tucson, Arizona 85721

3 July 1995

President Hafez al-Assad  
Presidential Palace  
Damascus  
Syrian Arab Republic

Your Excellency:

We are writing out of concern for Nizar Nayouf, a Syrian citizen and M.A. graduate of the University of Damascus who is currently a doctoral student in economics at the American University of Beirut. Mr. Nayouf is currently in prison for participating in the organization of a human rights association.

The Middle East Studies Association comprises 2400 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.

According to our sources Nizar Nayouf was sentenced for activity on behalf of the Committees for the Defense of Democratic Freedoms and Human Rights in Syria to ten years imprisonment with hard labor and deprivation of his civil rights for ten years following his release. We believe that any punishment of an academic for joining others in peaceably expressing views of this sort is not only a violation of basic principles of academic freedom but also violates human rights, including the right of freedom of expression and the right to strive to secure the observance of human rights.

In addition to being severely punished for his human rights work, we understand that Nayouf has been treated inhumanely. He has been placed in solitary confinement for long periods and has been deprived of vital medical treatment.

We respectfully urge that Mr. Nayouf be treated for his medical problems, that he be permitted to have regular contact with family, that his sentence be lifted, and that the right of academics to participate in peaceful organizations expressing a variety of views be respected.

Respectfully,

Anne H. Betteridge  
Executive Director

cc: Ambassador Walid Al-Moualem, Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic  
His Excellency Khalid al-Ansari, Minister of Justice  
His Excellency Muhammad Harba, Minister of the Interior  
His Excellency Nusrat Menella Haider, President of the Supreme Constitutional Court