



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

1219 N Santa Rita Ave
The University of Arizona
Tucson AZ 85721 USA

520 621-5850
520 626-9095 fax
mesana@u.arizona.edu
www.mesa.arizona.edu

May 13, 2005

Dr. Angela Roger, President
Association of University Teachers
Egmont House
25-31 Tavistock Place
London WC1H 9UT
United Kingdom

Fax: +44-020-7670-9799

Dear Dr. Roger:

The Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) is writing to express its profound disagreement with the recent decision of the Association of University Teachers (AUT) calling on its members to “refrain from participation in any form of academic and cultural cooperation, or joint projects” with Haifa University and Bar Ilan University, in Israel. We strongly urge the Association to withdraw or rescind this resolution to boycott these universities and blacklist their faculty at the very earliest opportunity.

The Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) comprises 2600 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.

Our objection to this resolution derives from the deep commitment of this association and its membership to the principles of academic freedom and the free exchange of information and ideas. We are on record as opposing restrictions against individual scholars except in instances where those individuals have violated clearly established legal and ethical norms. We especially oppose penalizing entire segments of an academic community for any reason whatsoever. We find thoroughly objectionable the call of the AUT to refrain from any and all scholarly interaction with the entire professional staff of two universities because of the policies of the state in which they are situated.

This association has gone on record on a number of occasions to protest actions by the government of Israel that restrict in a systematic manner academic freedom and the right to education in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We are also mindful that establishment of Israeli civilian settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories constitutes a clear violation of international humanitarian law. For that reason, initiatives by scholars and academics urging the administration of Bar Ilan University to end its institutional complicity with such violations are appropriate, but these should not be initiatives that themselves constitute breaches with important principles of the right to receive and impart information and ideas, or that represent forms of collective punishment against individual academics who find themselves in that university.

In closing, we reiterate our determined opposition to the AUT decision to boycott Haifa University and Bar Ilan University and blacklist their faculty, and we look forward to a speedy and satisfactory resolution of the matter.

Thank you in advance for your attention to our views on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ali Banuazizi'. The signature is stylized with a large 'A' and 'B' and a trailing flourish.

Ali Banuazizi
President, Middle East Studies Association
Professor, Boston College

CC: Michael Britnall, American Political Science Association
Sally T. Hillsman, American Sociological Association
Jonathan Knight, American Association of University Professors
Maud Kozodoy, Committee for Concerned Scientists