



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

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April 8, 2011

Gregory D. Hess
Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty
Claremont McKenna College
500 E. Ninth Street
Claremont, CA 91711-6400

Dear Vice President Hess:

I write to you on behalf of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) and its Committee on Academic Freedom to express our concern about allegations made against Professor Bassam Frangieh in articles that recently appeared in at least two local publications. As you know, Professor Frangieh is a member of the faculty of the Department of Modern Languages at Claremont McKenna College and chair of the faculty committee administering the college's Middle East Studies major. These allegations concern statements that Professor Frangieh allegedly made and petitions he allegedly signed in connection with current political issues, as well as some of his scholarly work. We believe that these allegations and the resulting calls for Professor Frangieh's dismissal threaten not only Professor Frangieh's right to free speech but also the principles of academic freedom, and that they must therefore be vigorously rejected.

MESA was founded in 1966 to promote scholarship and teaching on the Middle East and North Africa. The preeminent organization in the field, the Association publishes the International Journal of Middle East Studies and has nearly 3000 members worldwide. MESA is committed to ensuring academic freedom and freedom of expression, both within the region and in connection with the study of the region in North America and elsewhere.

We are pleased to note that, after examining the allegations made against Professor Frangieh, you issued a statement concluding that "his political expressions fall within the framework of the appropriate exercise of his First Amendment rights" and that his "academic scholarship, which focuses on Arabic language, literature, and culture, falls within the appropriate exercise of his academic freedom." We are also pleased to note that the Claremont McKenna faculty has passed a resolution expressing its support for Professor Frangieh and affirming the right to free expression of all faculty and students at Claremont McKenna.

We believe that institutions of higher learning must resolutely uphold and defend the principles of academic freedom, and must also be sanctuaries for the free expression of ideas and opinions. This means that universities must also be a haven for controversial speech. We commend you and your colleagues for your clear and vigorous defense of academic freedom and free speech in this case, and we urge you to continue to stand firm in defense of Professor Frangieh.

Sincerely,

Suad Joseph
MESA President
Professor of Anthropology and Women's Studies, University of California, Davis

cc: *The Forum*
Claremont Courier