



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

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

14 February 1995

General 'Ali Abdullah Saleh  
Chairman of the Presidential Council  
Sana'a  
The Republic of Yemen

Your Excellency:

The Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association wishes to express its concern about news of the recent illegal dismissal of Dr. Abu Bakr al-Sakkaf from his position at Sana'a University, along with the transfer of his file to the ministry of civil service. It also wishes to express its shock about reports that he and a relative were beaten.

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.

The Committee understands that Dr. al-Sakkaf's removal resulted from his expression of political opinions. Removing him from his academic position for expressing opinions is in violation of the principle of academic freedom and freedoms upheld by international human rights principles. Furthermore, the process of his removal appears to have violated due process and the regulations at Sana'a University, as well as the laws of the Republic of Yemen. Finally, the Committee is concerned that Dr. al-Sakkaf's treatment is part of an effort to intimidate other academics by making him an example. The Committee urges the government of the Republic of Yemen to investigate this incident and to report the results of this investigation fully to human rights organizations and to the international media.

We respectfully request the government of Yemen to take appropriate measures to correct what appears to be a deteriorating situation at the university and to communicate to the relevant officials that respect for academic freedom is essential. We also respectfully ask that measures be taken to ensure that neither Dr. al-Sakkaf nor any of his Yemeni colleagues are subjected to any further mistreatment or intimidation for carrying out their mission as academics and researchers.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

Anne H. Betteridge  
Executive Director

cc: Ambassador Mohsin A. Alaini  
Ambassador Arthur H. Hughes