



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

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

8 January 1996

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

Your Excellency:

We are writing to express our concern about official acts and statements that appear to have been designed to intimidate Yemeni academics attending a conference on Yemen that was held in London in November 1995 under the auspices of the London School of Economics.

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.

It is our understanding that in advance of the conference President Saleh publicly announced that those attending would be treated as traitors and separatists, and that he repeated this in a public speech at Aden University after the conference. These warnings obviously imply threats to the safety and freedom of the academics attending the conference, threats incompatible with principles of academic freedom. The London conference was an academic conference attended by respected scholars, including ones from the United States. There can be no justification for threatening Yemeni intellectuals for merely participating in a forum to exchange ideas with colleagues.

Moreover, we understand that some of the Yemeni academics were telephoned prior to their departure by the political security and advised not to attend. We further understand that upon the academics' return to Yemen, some were detained at the airport and their papers and documents confiscated by the authorities. Thus, the pattern of intimidation appears to have extended well beyond the President's general condemnation of the attendees as separatists and traitors to arrests, searches, and seizures.

We respectfully call for the institution of a policy of respect for the principles of academic freedom and an end to threats to Yemenis who are carrying out the normal

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mission of scholars. We also call for an end to police measures that effectively criminalize mainstream academic activities such as attending conferences.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anne H. Betteridge". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and a long, sweeping underline.

Anne H. Betteridge  
Executive Director

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