



November 23, 2011

**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
SBS-MESA@email.arizona.edu
www.mesana.org



December 01-04, 2011
WASHINGTON DC

President Mark G. Yudof
Office of the President
University of California
1111 Franklin St., 12th Floor
Oakland, CA 94607

Dear President Yudof,

I write to you on behalf of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) of North America and its Committee on Academic Freedom in order to express our dismay and concern over the recent use of violence by police officers of the University of California against members of the university community engaged in peaceful protest on university campuses.

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, including many faculty, students and others in the University of California system. 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 deeply disturbed by recent reports and images of the use of excessive force by police against faculty and students on several University of California campuses, and the clear violation of the right of free speech and of peaceful protest that these actions represent. We appreciate your forthright declaration that such violence has no place at UC and your promise vigorously to investigate the events at UC Davis, Berkeley, Los Angeles and other campuses. We call upon you and your colleagues to ensure:

- that all committees established to investigate incidents of excessive use of force are fully independent, are representative of the university community, and possess sufficient authority to require that all administration and police officials provide all relevant documents concerning the policies governing the use of force by police officers, and how and why officers on the ground were authorized to use excessive force during these incidents.
- that any investigation specifically establish clear accountability as to who authorized police in riot gear and clearly primed to use significant force against peaceful protesters who constituted no imminent threat to people or property. For example, UC Davis Chancellor Linda Katehi has publicly accepted responsibility for calling the police, but the nature of that call, who decided on the approach adopted by the police to deal with the protest,

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including the use of pepper spray, all need to be determined and publicly disclosed, and appropriate disciplinary procedures needs to be initiated against those found responsible.

- that university administrators be directed to drop all pending charges and disciplinary actions against students, faculty and/or staff arrested during these protests.

Finally, we call on you, as president of the University of California, to make it unmistakably clear that you and the institution you lead respect, and will protect, the rights of members of the university campus to engage in peaceful protest on campus.

Sincerely,



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

cc: Linda P.B. Katehi, Chancellor, UC Davis
Linda Bisson, Chair Academic Senate, UC Davis