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### The Amman Declaration on Academic Freedom And the Independence of the Institutions Of Higher Education and Scientific Research

Higher education and scientific research institutions in the Arab World are suffering from many problems. These problems include the methods of teaching, the curricula of research, methods of administration, misuse of resources and the training of teachers. However, the bigger problem which relates to all these problems and which aggravates them is the manipulation of higher education and scientific research to achieve goals that are beyond the scope of the goals of preparation, training and scientific research.

In most Arab countries, public authorities, and even the security services, impose their direct trusteeship on university life and treat the members of the teaching and administrative staff at all levels in accordance with the rationale of loyalty and favoritism. Scientific curricula, programs and projects are subject to the narrow-minded policies and the goals of protecting the regime and the monopoly of power. They specify the knowledge that should be learnt and minimize the activity of the researchers and scientists in the country and abroad. They also suppress the views of others and use universities as centers of party propaganda or ideological propagation.

This explains the inevitability of the failure of the educational policies despite the substantial expansion in building universities, scientific centers and huge investments spent on them. It is this failure, which is keeping the Arab World in a state of continuous and vast subservience to foreign scientific and technological expertise until this very day. It also renders hundreds of thousands of graduates permanently unemployed.

In view of this continuous retreat of the institutions and levels of higher education and scientific research, there is an urgent need now to draw the attention of Arab government officials and public to the dangers of subjecting Arab universities and scientific research institutions to factional and personal interests, of depriving them of independence, while stressing the need to develop a sound scientific environment to serve as an independent and productive Arab action.

Therefore, it is necessary to continue the local, regional and international initiatives launched for the purpose of reinforcing academic freedom and the independence of the higher education institutes, such as the Lima Declaration on academic freedom that was issued by the meeting of the General Assembly of the International University Services in 1988, the Dar El Salaam Declaration of 1990, the Declaration of the UNESCO Conference in Beirut in 1998 and the initiatives that preceded and followed.

On the basis of the international conventions, agreements and norms that have been approved on human rights, particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on the Civil and Political Rights, and the UNESCO Anti-Discrimination Convention, **the Conference of Academic Freedom in the Arab Universities held at the invitation of the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies [ACHRS]** in the capital of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on 15 and 16 December 2004 with the participation of an elite of thinkers, university presidents, professors, and researchers from the various Arab universities declares the **following principles**:

- 1- Political trusteeship imposed on the academic community should be revoked. Public authorities should comply with the respect of the independence of the scientific society with its three components of professors, students and administrative personnel. The academic community should not fall under foreign pressure or political interventions, which could harm the freedom of the academic institutions. In fact, this is a prerequisite for the success of the educational process and the advancement of scientific research.
- 2- Academic freedom includes the right of the academic community to run itself by itself, to make the decisions on running its own affairs, and to enact whatever is suitable of the bylaws, regulations and measures which help achieve its educational and scientific research goals.
- 3- To assert the right of all citizens to the equality of opportunity so as to join the scientific research and higher education, whether it means the right to join the educational body or utilize the educational opportunities without facing any political, religious, social or racial discrimination. It also implies the right of the students to secure a scientific training that is compatible with the needs of the fruitful social life as well as the fulfillment of their professional aspirations. It also means that they could choose the field of their studies freely and that the official government authorities should recognize their academic freedom and skills.

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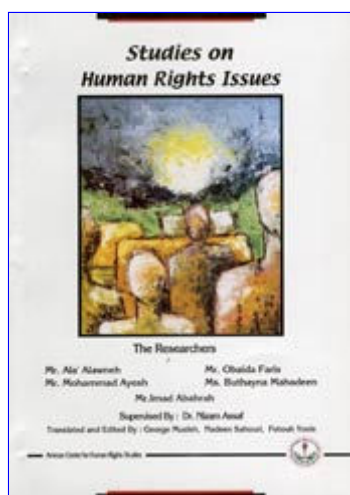
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- 4- To assert the right of the members of the Arab academic community to move easily within the Arab states, to contact the international academic community, to reach the sources of data and information, to exchange ideas and views and disseminate them without restrictions or harassment.
- 5- To assert the right of the higher education and scientific research institutions to run their own affairs on democratic basis, to chose their academic staff through free elections and to be entrusted with all that is relevant to the appointment of the members of the scientific body or to separating or promoting them on the basis of professional criterion. It also asserts the right of the students to participate in this administration.
- 6- To assert the right of the members of the academic community with its three components to form private unions to defend their interests or serve their ends.
- 7- To assert the duty of the State to provide the necessary resources to expand the network of higher education and scientific research, to advance the quality of higher education and scientific research, to pay special attention to the level of training and living standards of the scientific community so as to meet the needs of society and to seek to provide university education to all those who are willing.
- 8- To assert the rights of the academic community toward the public authorities and the civil society organizations and this dictates on the academic community basic scientific and ethical commitments. Foremost of these is the commitment to scientific and humanitarian values, the respect of students and treating them in accordance with the criteria of the scientific and professional efficiency.
- 9- Compliance of the members of the academic community to placing education and scientific research in the service of their communities, to refrain from taking advantage of academic freedom and the results of the scientific research for purposes that contravene the goals of the educational and scientific process or violate the principles of human rights or humanitarian goals and values.
- 10- Compliance of the higher education and scientific research institutions with the domestication of scientific research and scientifically qualified personnel, upgrading cooperation with the public authorities and the civil society institutions, and curbing the phenomenon of the brain drain from the Arab countries.
- 11- Compliance of the higher education and scientific research institutions with meeting the economic, social, political, legal, cultural and ethical needs of their communities and resisting the violations of human rights, irrespective of the party who is committing the violations.
- 12- Material and moral commitment of the higher education and scientific research institutions in solidarity with the Arab academic communities and offering support to the members who are subject to the violation of their rights in the Arab World and the world at large.
- 13- Commitment of the higher education and scientific research institutions with the upgrading of the relations of cooperation and partnership in the Arab world and in the world at large so as to bridge the knowledge and scientific gap between the human societies, to break the monopoly of knowledge, to benefit from the results of scientific research, so that the dissemination of these results would not be restricted to a small group of states or companies, and to seek to place scientific knowledge in the service of understanding among the various sides of the international community and of the harmony of mankind.

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