



SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

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April 18, 2024

Dear Professors Cohen, Sheafer, and Ben Arieh,

Re: SeSaMO (Italian Association of Middle Eastern Studies) Committee on Academic Freedom Statement on the Arrest of Hebrew University Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian.

SeSaMO was established in 1995 and it is the leading Italian organisation devoted to the scholarly study of the Middle East and North Africa. The Committee for Academic Freedom (CAF) of SeSaMO defends academic freedom, understood as the inalienable right to the transmission and circulation of research and knowledge, as well as all related freedoms (education, work, movement and residence, manifestation of thought and assembly) according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Art. 15.3) and the Italian Constitution (Art. 33). The Committee monitors governmental actions of censorship and restriction of research independence, on mobility, prosecution, and extrajudicial imprisonment and elimination of individuals on the basis of their scholarly activity. It is within our institutional remit therefore that we take urgent action in relation to the arrest of Hebrew University Professor and internationally renowned feminist scholar Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian. On Thursday, April 18, 2024, Professor Shalhoub-Kevorkian was arrested by Israeli police at her home in the Old City of Jerusalem on the charge of incitement to violence. The police raided and searched her home and she is currently undergoing harsh and dehumanizing interrogation. Her lawyer said the charges against her are serious. Information about her release is unknown. However, it is widely known that it is common for Palestinians in Israeli detention to suffer physical, emotional, and mental violence. Professor Shalhoub-Kevorkian, who holds both Israeli and U.S. citizenship, has already been subjected to repression and harassment by the Hebrew University for speaking out against what the International Court of Justice' recent provisional ruling has recognized as the current Israeli government's responsibility in a plausible risk of



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genocide. Indeed, though she was suspended from her teaching duties in March, she was later reinstated once it became clear that there is no basis for the allegations against her.

The attack against Professor Shalhoub-Kevorkian is one on all Palestinian scholars, students, and activists. We recognize this attack as an attempt to silence criticism of Israeli state violence. The government's and the Hebrew University's responsibilities in relation to Professor Shalhoub-Kevorkian are especially grave given the context of a society in which open genocidal incitement and rhetoric are widespread. Indeed, the Minister of National Security Itamar Ben Gvir welcomed the arrest and said that it "conveys an important message – whoever incites against the State of Israel, we will take action against them. They will not be able to hide behind their position or any other title." This silencing and repression endangers not only Professor Shalhoub-Kevorkian, but also the lives and education of students who study, write, and are part of her intellectual community in the HUJ and beyond.

We, as international academics, are outraged at this arrest and for the persistent and public repression of Professor Shalhoub-Kevorkian's personal and academic freedoms, leading directly to today's arrest.

We remind the Hebrew University of Jerusalem of its responsibilities to protect the academic freedom of its staff and students, and to uphold the values of open debate and dialogue across intellectual and political differences, which are a central purpose and value of universities.

Yours Sincerely,

Rosita Di Peri and Maria Chiara Rioli

On behalf of the Board and the Committee on Academic Freedom of SeSaMO