

December 11, 2009

His Excellency Jean-Félix Paganon  
Ambassador, Embassy of France to the Arab Republic of Egypt  
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Giza, Egypt - B.P. 1777  
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Consul-General Marie Masdupuy  
Consulate General of France in Egypt  
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Dear Ambassador Paganon and Consul Masdupuy:

The undersigned scholars and researchers are writing to express serious concern and dismay at the recent decision to close by the end of this month the valuable library of the Centre d'Études et de Documentation Économiques, Juridiques et Sociales (CEDEJ). CEDEJ is one of the premier research institutions in Egypt, supporting a steady stream of significant social research on Egypt and the Arab world.

Shuttering any kind of library in Egypt is a real loss. Social science research in the country is hamstrung by scant resources, political and bureaucratic constraints, and notorious difficulty in securing even the most basic information. In such a context, the resources offered by CEDEJ are nothing short of indispensable for both generalists and specialists working in dozens of disciplines.

Closing the CEDEJ library in particular would be tragic. Since 1969, the library has been a unique and welcoming space for researchers hailing from all parts of the world. Its holdings have been raw materials for hundreds of theses, articles, and books. And its dedicated staff of seven is unfailingly helpful and professional; some have been serving library patrons for more than two decades.

As you know, the library houses in one compact space a wealth of sources: social science periodicals published in Egypt, Europe, and elsewhere, including publications of the Egyptian women's press of the 1920s and 1930s; books on Egyptian and Arab politics in several languages, some dating from the early 20th century; a rich archive of Egyptian press clippings from 1977 to the present on a wide range of topics, perhaps the best and only such archive in Egypt; and Egyptian government documents, including contemporary ministerial reports and censuses dating from 1848.

In the spirit of knowledge-building that CEDEJ has embodied for so many years, we strongly urge you to reconsider the decision and keep the library doors open. Generations of past and future researchers will be grateful.

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