



LUND UNIVERSITY
Center for Middle Eastern Studies

Professor Leif Stenberg
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8 April, 2018

To whom it may concern,

I was recently contacted by Dr Umut Özkirimli, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Lund University. He wanted a written statement from me regarding the allegations made against him at the end of March and beginning of April 2013. The background is that, at that time, I was Director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES) and therefore ultimately responsible for the international master's programme in Middle Eastern Studies at CMES.

At the end of March 2013, I was also contacted by a CMES researcher, Lory Dance. Some students had contacted her regarding what they saw as inappropriate behaviour by two of the teachers at CMES. The communication between the students and Lory Dance was in English and the term used was "inappropriate behaviour". A meeting was arranged together with the students, and it took place on 4 April 2014. After having listened and talked to the students who came to the meeting, I decided to invite the two teachers concerned to individual meetings. I felt it was important that action was taken straight away, and I had individual meetings with the two teachers on 5 and 8 April 2013. The meeting with Dr Özkirimli took place on 8 April because he was in Stockholm for work. In both meetings, I set out what allegations had been made against them and made very clear what was expected in a professional relationship between students and teachers at Lund University. At the same time, it should be emphasised that Dr Özkirimli did not accept that he had behaved inappropriately in relation to students.

In order to act in the matter, I decided that, in cooperation with the Student Council, we should invite a council representative to a meeting with the staff. With the assistance of Clara Lundblad, President of the Student Council at the Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology, Elin Gustafsson was invited, who at that time was vice-president of the Social Sciences Council, to talk all staff at CMES about relationships between students and teachers. This took place on the morning of 8 April. A little later, we dedicated an afternoon to more discussion on the same subject and a more detailed review of the rules. We followed up these discussions on the kick-off day with all staff before the autumn semester 2013.

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In meetings and emails with the student representatives from both CMES and the Student Council, the matter was discussed further. With regard to the allegations, it was still one person's word against another's. At the same time, students also sent me emails that either expressed support for Dr Özkirimli or stated that they did not wish to give an opinion on the matter. The students were therefore not in agreement. The allegations were not presented to me in a concrete form. In order to proceed with a claim, I would ideally have been provided with some kind of oral or written statement of what the inappropriate behaviour consisted of, but that was never made clear to me. In contact with representatives, I stressed that this was a requirement for me to be able to take further action and, for example, to issue a formal, written warning to the teachers. However, the representatives of the Student Council or the student representatives at CMES did not proceed any further with the matter of the inappropriate behaviour of the two teachers either. For example, this could have been done through the CMES board, or another university body. Consequently, the case was not pursued.

On the day specified above,

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Before the Skype conversation with the former director, the investigator received a document briefly describing what happened at the end of 2013 and during 2014 in connection with Y. No verbal warning was issued but there are emails etc. that describe various perceptions and activities that were carried out at the time. During the interview, it is also mentioned that there is a history of Y being keen to have "disciples".

Analysis

X On the basis of the material available in text messages, messenger texts, etc. between X and Y, it is clear how X tried to delimit her involvement with Y. When she ended the relationship, Y lost something that he valued highly. His emotional reaction is expressed in various control strategies/master suppression techniques through which he tried to limit her contact with other male colleagues. Victim behaviours also occur in various forms, such as laying guilt on her for his deteriorating state of mind. The hacker events are a matter for the police in which it is her word against his as to what happened. There is as yet no factual proof, so this aspect cannot be considered in the present report. However – in the light of X expressing that she had lost trust and wanting to change supervisor – the entry in the EU portal can be seen lacking in judgement and a reinforcement of X's perception that she is being harassed. Based on what has been described above, the investigator's assessment is that Y's behaviour towards X constitutes harassment in the form of stalking. (See appendices 3-7)

That both parties started a friendship initially seems to have led to advantages for both of them. What the investigator sees as problematic is Y's self-appointed role as a helper of others (even before X) and that X chose to become intimate with Y. It is easy to end up feeling that one has a debt of gratitude and in a position of dependency, even though the agreement that she was not his girlfriend was explicitly stated. At the same time, it is natural and important that postdocs and other people in similar professional roles may need a hand with things like social contacts, projects, etc. to progress in their research careers. If the social support remains within a professional framework, this can bring advantages for both parties. The investigator perceives that Y now feels exploited by X who wants to move on without his assistance. Meanwhile X has felt guilty about the fact that she initially received a lot of both practical and social support from Y, which reduced her ability to act and contact the management before the situation escalated into a work environment problem.

X The events mainly took place outside working hours. But as they led to changes in their work relationship as well, e.g. the change of supervisors and that other colleagues became involved, the relationship turmoil has spilled over into the workplace. The psychosocial work environment and various colleagues are thereby negatively affected by a relationship that was initially private.

The parties currently have no ongoing work that requires collaboration. In view of this, conflict management aiming to repair their work relationship is thus not necessary. However, both parties need to know that the report and this investigation will lead to measures that are felt to be relevant to ensure that the vilification ceases. This will be achieved most simply through the experience of fairness and dignity.

Re: IMPORTANT - Your Skype interview with the investigator and some documents

Leif.Stenberg <leif.stenberg@aku.edu>

Fri 6/8/2018 9:34 AM

To: Umut Özkirimli <umut.ozkirimli@cme.lu.se>;

1 attachments (871 KB)

image001.jpg;

Dear Umut,

What was said in the beginning of the interview on Skype was that she, the investigator, talked to me to get the bigger picture. I did not understand that as her being on a mission to collect more "evidence". Since we spoke in Swedish, I think her rendering is not entirely correct. I also said that you are a well-known and established scholar and that you attract students who would like to study with you. I think that is the context. All academics like to have disciples!

Best,

Leif S

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From: Umut Özkirimli <umut.ozkirimli@cme.lu.se>
Date: Thursday, 7 June 2018 at 19:48
To: "Leif.Stenberg" <leif.stenberg@aku.edu>
Subject: IMPORTANT - Your Skype interview with the investigator and some documents

Hi Leif

I got the report of the investigator for the Pinar case. She claims that you said the following: "There is a history of Y (me) being keen on having disciples." She is using this against me, as you can see below. I do not think you would say something like this, or at least not in that sense. The report is a farce - unprofessional, heavily biased and dismissive of facts and concrete evidence presented by me. So I wouldn't be surprised if she misquoted you or distorted your words.