

Address by Dr. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, Minister of Education

18 December 1950

It is often said that eloquence lies in brevity. You know how keen I am to be eloquent, and so I shall try—very earnestly—to be brief. Indeed, the finest form of brevity may well be silence. For the Minister of Education has, strictly speaking, no place addressing this gathering, even if the traditions of the Academy require the minister to speak. Within these walls, the minister is but a guest of the President of the Academy; even if he is himself a member, he remains a guest—though in his own house.

The floor, therefore, ought first to belong to the President, and then to those who wish to speak about the Academy's work and affairs. I do not really know that the Minister of Education has any grammatical case, so to speak, in a ceremony such as this. I know only that he has intruded—or has been made to intrude—into a place that is not properly his.

Let me therefore be brief. Let my words be no more than the government's greeting to your distinguished Academy, and my pledge that, God willing, I shall be at your disposal whenever you wish. You have work that must be carried out, decisions that must be implemented, and projects that must be brought to completion—and for all of this, you need the support of the Minister of Education. I give you my word that, so long as I remain Minister of Education, I shall see to the execution of your work, the implementation of your decisions, and the realization of your projects. This is all that a Minister of Education can properly say to an Academy as distinguished as yours.

As for speaking to you about the Arabic language and its concerns—about its reform and the preservation of its integrity, and all that is laid down in the Academy's founding decree—that is a familiar discourse. I spare you from hearing it, and I spare myself from entering into it. All I wish for you is that this session may be as fruitful as the last, that your work in it may be as blessed as before, and that God may grant you success in fulfilling the hopes you so richly deserve.

I had intended to be brief, yet I have spoken at length. I therefore apologize for breaking my promise, and I now relinquish my place to His Excellency the President.

Journal of the Arabic Language Academy (Egypt)

Issue 8, 1 January 1955