

ity in Cairo has responded to official requests and acted to remove the book Mohammed by the French author Maxime Rodinson. The volume has been available in Egypt since its publication in the early 1970's." Shehab said that his decision was based on the fact that "it is the constitutional duty of the Ministry of Higher Education to supervise university education," be

it public or private. Shehab explained that all universities have the right to choose the curricula that are taught to students and the professors who teach them. And, he added, "it is up to the professor and his conscience to choose the books that he will use in teaching his course. It is very difficult to interfere with the thinking of professors".

On the other hand, Shehab said that if students are displeased with what they are being taught, then they have the right to complain to the university's management. "But this rarely happens," he added. Shehab said the AUC professor "obviously had no bad intentions. He certainly was not trying to force the students to embrace the ideas that are contained in the book." Shehab conceded that the book has been in circulation in Egypt for the past 15 years and taught at AUC for about seven years. "As far as the ministry is concerned, the whole matter is closed," he said. AUC sources said the university's library had four copies of the book, which have been withdrawn from circulation. It was on the reading list of a political-science course in the early 1970's and a history course in the early 1990's, the same course the book was being studied on in this semester. A source close to the professor said he invited his students to submit critical reviews of the book's content. "Students were required to criticise the book from whatever perspective they wished. The professor certainly did not praise the book and did not express a personal opinion. He even suggested other titles written by Muslim scholars so that the students might be exposed to ideas other than those the book advocates," the source said. According to the same AUC source, the professor has great respect for Islam and would defend it, whenever necessary. The source added that the professor had been involved, in his home country, in many battles defending Islam and Muslims against racism and media vilification of Islam. The professor has the support of many of his students. One of them, a Saudi Arabian, told the Weekly that the professor, while assigning the book to students, said that "it is not an Islamic book and may prove to be provocative and offending, so it will be easy for you to criticise. He provided us with the titles of Islamic references, so that we could build up a