



**Middle  
East  
Studies  
Association**  
of North America, Inc.

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Washington, DC

22 July 2008

HRH Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud  
Minister of Interior  
Ministry of Interior  
PO Box 2933  
Riyadh 11134  
The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

via fax 011-966-1-403-1185

Your Highness:

On May 30, 2008 the Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association wrote to you to express our deep concern over the arrest and detention of Professor Matrouk Al-Faleh of the Department of Political Science at King Saud University. Professor Al-Faleh was arrested sometime after leaving his house on May 19, 2008.

Since sending that letter, additional, disturbing information about Professor Al-Faleh's situation has come to our attention. Although formal charges have still not been brought against him, we have learned that he has been imprisoned in Al-Hair prison, a maximum security facility. It is also our understanding that he has now been officially dismissed from his position as professor of political science with no possibility of reinstatement. Moreover, to underline his insistence on having a lawyer present during any interrogation, Professor Faleh has undertaken a hunger strike.

As we noted in our previous letter, MESA's Committee on Academic Freedom takes particular interest in Professor Al-Faleh's case because he was selected as the recipient of MESA's academic freedom award in November 2004. MESA, which promotes scholarship and teaching on the Middle East and North Africa and has more than 2800 members worldwide, is the preeminent organization in the field. It is committed to ensuring academic freedom and freedom of expression, both within the region and in connection with the study of the region in North America and elsewhere. In bestowing its academic freedom award upon Professor Al-Faleh, MESA cited him for "his courageous and principled stance. He and his colleagues have made a brave stand in favor of freedom of speech and academic freedom, and they deserve our support and our admiration."

We are, therefore, particularly disturbed that Professor Al-Faleh has not been processed by the Saudi judicial system, that, in the absence of such processing, he has apparently been dismissed from his university post, and that he is currently on a hunger strike.

Thus, once again we urge you to accord Professor Al-Faleh his full rights to express himself, both politically and academically--the same rights that he advocates so forcefully for others. We also ask, on behalf of our organization, that you ensure that Professor Al-Faleh be granted access to a lawyer, be released promptly or be charged with a criminal offense, and if he is charged, that he be tried before a court that meets international fair trial standards.

We look forward to receiving your response.

Respectfully,

Mervat F. Hatem  
MESA President  
Professor of Political Science, Howard University

cc:

His Excellency Adel A. Al-Jubeir, Saudi Ambassador to the United States  
King Saud University, Department of Political Science