



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

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January 14, 2015

Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu
Minister of Justice Tzipi Livni
Minister of Defense Moshe Ya'alon
Minister of Education Shai Piron

Dear Prime Minister and Ministers,

I write to you on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) to express our outrage regarding the arbitrary arrest and administrative detention of Dr. Imad al-Barghouthi, an internationally-renowned Palestinian astro-physicist and professor at Al-Quds University. He is being held without charge or trial until March 5, 2015, under a three-month, renewable military court order.

MESA was founded in 1966 to promote scholarship and teaching on the Middle East and North Africa. The preeminent organization in the field, MESA publishes the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and has nearly 3000 members worldwide. MESA is committed to ensuring academic freedom of expression, both within the region and in connection with the study of the region in North America and elsewhere.

We have learned that Dr. al-Barghouthi was arrested by Israeli authorities on December 6, 2014, at the Karama border crossing as he was trying to go to Jordan from the Occupied West Bank. Dr. Al-Barghouthi was on his way to the United Arab Emirates to attend a congress organized by the Arab Association of Astronomy and Space Sciences, of which he is a founding member. He was subsequently placed under administrative detention. In the absence of any charges against him, unconfirmed reports have suggested that his arrest and detention result from his writings and participation in demonstrations last summer protesting the war on Gaza.

To be sure, preventing Dr. Al-Barghouthi from attending a scholarly meeting of his professional association is a clear and unmistakable infringement of his academic freedom, while arresting and incarcerating him for protesting Israel's assault on Gaza – which resulted in appalling destruction, including the loss of life of more than 2000 Palestinians – is a violation of his freedom of expression. Furthermore, the routine Israeli practice of administrative detention is, as noted by several international human rights organizations, a violation of the fundamental rights of detainees. Incarcerating individuals indefinitely, without charges or trial, is cruel and unjust. Moreover, while in detention, individuals are often subjected to harsh and degrading treatment. Besides, the practice of administrative detention – often associated with the French colonial regime in Algeria and Apartheid South Africa – is contrary to Israel's obligations under international law.



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We call upon you to release Dr. Imad al-Barghouthi from detention immediately and allow him to pursue his scholarly activities unobstructed. Indeed, we urge you, more generally, to cease all efforts to thwart the academic and professional work of Palestinian scholars. Finally, we encourage you to put a stop, once and for all, to the practice of administrative detention.

We thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter, and look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nathan Brown', written in a cursive style.

Nathan Brown
MESA President