



**Middle
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May 16, 2016

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu
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Minister of Education Naftali Bennet
Minister of Higher Education
Chairman, Council for Higher Education of Israel
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Dear Prime Minister and Ministers,

We 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 at the detention of Imad Barghouti, Professor of Theoretical Space Plasma Physics at Al-Quds University.

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 3,000 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.



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Professor Barghouti is a former National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) employee, an internationally renowned scientist, and a pillar of Al-Quds University's academic community. On Sunday 24 April 2016, the Israeli army arrested Professor Barghouti at the Nabi Saleh checkpoint northwest of Ramallah. On Monday 2 May, using emergency regulations dating back to British Mandatory rule, the Israeli army sentenced Professor Barghouti to three months' detention, without charge or trial. Nine days later, on 11 May, the Israeli Ofer court adjusted its ruling and sentenced Professor Barghouti to two months of administrative detention for "incitement" on a Facebook post.

This is the second instance of the Israeli authorities' arrest and administrative detention of Professor Barghouti. On 6 December 2014, the Israeli authorities detained Professor Barghouti on his way to a congress organized by the Arab Association of Astronomy and Space Sciences, of which he is a founding member. There were no charges filed against him at that time, but unconfirmed reports suggested that his arrest resulted from his opposition to Israel's assault on Gaza in 2014. We wrote to you on 14 January 2015 and called upon you to release Professor Barghouti.

In this case, just as in the previous one, Israel's use of these emergency regulations violate Professor Barghouti's basic rights as well as international law more broadly. As an occupying power, Israel is bound by the Fourth Geneva Convention to inform individuals of the reason for their arrest as well as to facilitate a speedy and fair trial. The Israeli court's charge of "incitement" on Facebook is completely groundless as well as a violation of academic freedom and freedom of expression as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. We urge you to release Professor Barghouti immediately.

We await your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'B. Baron' followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Beth Baron
MESA President
Professor, City University of New York

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Amy W. Newhall' in a cursive style.

Amy W. Newhall
MESA Executive Director
Associate Professor, University of Arizona