



**Middle
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Studies
Association**
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January 27, 2011

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

via fax 011-966-1-403-1185

Your Highness:

I write on behalf of the Middle East Studies Association of North America and its Committee on Academic Freedom. We express our concern over the arrest and detention of Professor Mohammed al Abdulkarim of the Faculty of Islamic Jurisprudence at Imam Mohammed bin Saud University. Professor al Abdulkarim was arrested on December 5, 2010, apparently for an article he published online about differences in the ruling family over succession and the transfer of power in the Kingdom. Professor al Abdulkarim is also a member of the Human Rights Commission, the editor in chief of the *National Congress Journal* and a member of the Arab Organization for Human Rights.

The Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) was founded in 1966 to promote scholarship and teaching of 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 and freedom of expression, both within the region and in connection with the study of the region in North America and elsewhere.

Article 36 of the Saudi Basic Law guarantees that no citizen may be detained without due process of law. As of yet, there is no evidence that due process of law has been followed in this case. No formal charges have been filed, to our knowledge, yet he remains imprisoned in Al-Hayer prison south of Riyadh, a maximum security facility. By Saudi Arabian law, he should have access to his lawyer and should have seen a judge by now. Under Saudi law, he should not have been detained for more than 24 hours without being charged.

We ask that you ensure Professor al Abdulkarim be granted full access to his lawyer and that due process of law be upheld in this case. If he is charged with an offense, we ask that he be tried before a court that meets fair international standards. If he is not to be charged, we urge that he be released promptly, accorded his full right to self-expression, and allowed to resume his professional responsibilities without conditions or limitations on his academic freedom, and without professional sanction or penalty. We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Suad Joseph
MESA President
Professor of Anthropology & Women's Studies, University of California, Davis

cc: HRH Prince Mohammed bin Naif bin Abdulaziz, Assistant to Interior Minister