



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

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20 November 2025

The Right Honourable Mark Carney
Prime Minister of Canada
pm@pm.gc.ca
mark.carney@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Anita Anand
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Anita.Anand@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Gary Anandasangaree
Minister of Public Safety
gary.anand@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Lena Metlege Diab
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
Lenametlege.diab@parl.gc.ca

Mme. Erin O’Gorman
President, Canada Border Services Agency
erin.ogorman@cbsa-asfc.gc.ca

Dear Prime Minister Carney, Minister Anand, Minister Anandasangaree,
Minister Diab, Mme. O’Gorman:

We write on behalf of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) and its Committee on Academic Freedom to express our consternation and our outrage at the unwarranted and unjustified harassment that Richard Falk, the eminent emeritus professor of international law at Princeton University and former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territories, was subjected to by agents of the Canada Border Services after arriving at Toronto Pearson International Airport from the United States on 13 November 2025. Professor Falk and his wife, Professor Hilal Elver, had landed in Canada en route to Ottawa to participate in the Palestine Tribunal on Canadian Responsibility on 14-15 November, when they were detained while going through customs. A border agent took their passports, led them to a room where they were held for close to four hours, and Falk was interrogated at length. We object profoundly to such mistreatment of this 95-year-old world-renowned scholar and human rights advocate by the Canadian authorities.

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 2800 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.

Apparently, the border agents indicated that they had detained Professor Falk in order to determine whether he was a threat to Canada's national security and should be allowed to enter the country. As preposterous as that suggestion is, we are confident that the Canadian authorities were far more concerned about (his participation in) the gathering in Ottawa – a people's tribunal on Canada's complicity in the genocide in Gaza since October 2023 and the dispossession of the Palestinian people. Specifically, the unacknowledged intent in detaining Professor Falk seems to have been to create an atmosphere of intimidation and thereby discourage and delegitimize testimonies of Palestinian suffering, criticism of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians and the complicity therein of the United States and Canada, along with advocacy in favor of Palestinian rights.

We call upon the Canadian government to issue an immediate apology to Professor Richard Falk and Professor Hilal Elver. We urge the government to reflect upon its role in contributing to Palestinian suffering and to categorically defend Palestinian rights (as opposed to its provisional and ambiguous support for some ill-defined notion of Palestinian statehood). Finally, we urge the government to uphold and unwaveringly support free expression and debate even about the most pressing and contested issues of our time – the hallmark of the healthy, vibrant democracy that Canada claims to be.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Ash Ü. Bâli
MESA President
Professor, Yale Law School



Re: Richard Falk
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A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Laurie A. Brand'.

Laurie A. Brand
Chair, Committee on Academic Freedom
Professor Emerita, University of Southern California

Cc:

The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Member of Parliament and Chair of
SECU (Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security)

Senator Paulette Senior, chair of RIDR (Standing Senate Committee on
Human Rights)

Senator Hassan Yussuff, chair of SECD (Standing Senate Committee on
National Security, Defense and Veteran Affairs)

Senator Yuen Pau Woo