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30 July 2020

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Dear Prime Minister, Ministers, Ambassador, and Brigadier-General,

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 about the 16 July 2020 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 2,500 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.

Professor Barghouti is a former National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) employee, an internationally renowned scientist, and a pillar of Al-Quds



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University's academic community. On Thursday 16 July, Israeli military forces arrested Professor Barghouti at a military checkpoint outside of Anata while he was travelling from the university campus to his home in Ramallah. He is now under administrative detention, confined to an Israeli detention facility, without charges or trial and prohibited from contact with his spouse and children.

This is the third instance of the Israeli authorities' arrest and administrative detention of Professor Barghouti. On 6 December 2014, Israeli forces 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 July and August 2014. We wrote to you on [14 January 2015](#) and called on you to release Professor Barghouti. On 24 April 2016, Professor Barghouti was held under administrative detention after Israeli forces arrested him at the Nabi Saleh checkpoint, northwest of Ramallah. We wrote to you on [16 May 2016](#), calling for his release. On 29 May 2016, Professor Barghouti was released but military prosecutors filed charges of "incitement" against him, leading to the cancellation of his release. We wrote on Professor Barghouti's behalf on [8 June 2016](#).

In this most recent instance, as in the previous two, Israel's use of these emergency regulations violates 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. Barghouti's administrative detention is a violation of his academic freedom and freedom of expression as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political 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, appearing to read 'Dina Rizk Khoury', with a long, sweeping underline.

Dina Rizk Khoury  
MESA President  
Professor, George Washington University

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laurie Brand', with a stylized, cursive style.

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

cc:



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European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine (ECCP)

Michael Lynk, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the  
Palestinian territories

James Heenan, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ramallah

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, MENA section

Noha Bawazir, Head of Office and UNESCO Representative, UNESCO Liaison  
Office, Ramallah

Palestinian delegation to UNESCO

Viktor Almqvist, Press Officer - Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) and  
Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) - European Parliament