



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

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2 October 2023

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu
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Minister of Education Yoav Kisch
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Minister of Justice Yariv Levin
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Brigadier General Hisham Ibrahim
Head of Civil Administration in the West Bank, Coordination of
Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT)
Fax: +972-2-6599133

Chief Clerk Idit Malul
Supreme Court of the State of Israel
Fax: +972-2-6759648

Dear Prime Minister, Ministers, Brigadier-General, and Chief Clerk,

We write to you on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) to protest the arrest and detention without cause of Khaled El-Qaisi on 31 August 2023.

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 of expression, both within the region and in connection with the study of the region in North America and elsewhere.

Khaled El-Qaisi was arrested on 31 August 2023 by Israeli border police at the Allenby Bridge as he was departing from the West Bank to Amman, Jordan. El-Qaisi is a Palestinian-Italian studying Oriental Languages and Civilizations at La Sapienza University in Rome. He is a well-regarded translator and the founding member of the Palestinian Documentation Centre in Rome. Israeli authorities have yet to offer any explanation for his arrest. Furthermore, they have extended his detention for another eleven days.

Our committee has written to you before regarding the ongoing harassment and detention of Palestinian university students and staff (see our latest letters on [22 December 2021](#); [21 July 2021](#); [28 June 2021](#); and earlier on [11 April 2019](#)). El-Qaisi joins over 100 university students under arrest, some of whom are being held without charge under administrative detention.





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As with those incidents, we condemn the detention of Khaled El-Qaisi without cause and his continued denial of legal representation or due process. He should be released without delay.

Such arbitrary arrests and detentions of students are a clear violation of the right to education enshrined in Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 13 of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. Israel is a party to the UDHR and a signatory to the ICESCR and is therefore obligated to uphold them. We call upon you to immediately release Khaled El-Qaisi, cease these arbitrary detentions and ensure the rights of all Palestinian students to education, including as activists, unobstructed.

We look forward to receiving your positive response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Eve M. Troutt Powell'.

Eve Troutt Powell
MESA President
Professor, University of Pennsylvania

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Laurie A. Brand'.

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

cc:

Giorgia Meloni, President of the Council of Ministers, Government of Italy

Antonio Tajani, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of Italy

Anna Maria Bernini, Minister of Universities and Research, Government of Italy

Josep Borrell-Fontelles, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine

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

Maria Arena, Chair of the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights

Dunja Mijatovic, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

Kati Piri, Member, Committee on Foreign Affairs, European Parliament

Francesca Albanese, UN Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories

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

The Honorable Veronica Michelle Bachelet Jeria, The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Honorable Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders

Irene Khan, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression