

Middle East Studies Association of North America, Inc.
University of Arizona
1232 North Cherry Avenue
Tucson, Arizona 85721

June 22, 1993

His Royal Majesty King Fahd ibn abdel Aziz al-Saud
Custodian of the Council of Ministers
The Council of Ministers
Saudi Arabia

Your Royal Majesty:

The Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association is concerned about the reported arrest of one professor and dismissal of two additional professors as a result of their establishment of the Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights. The Middle East Studies Association comprises 2300 academics worldwide who teach and conduct research on the Middle East and North Africa. The association publishes the respected *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and is committed to ensuring respect for the principles of academic freedom and human rights throughout the region.

We understand that **Dr. Muhammad ibn Abdullah al-Mas'ari**, spokesman for the Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights, was dismissed from his position as professor of physics at King Saud University and then arrested on May 15, 1993, and imprisoned. We understand further that Dr. al-Mas'ari has not been allowed visits from members of his family or from his lawyer.

Moreover, we have learned that **Dr. Abdullah ibn Humoud al-Tuwaijri**, chair of the Sunna department, and **Dr. Abdullah al-Hamed**, poet and professor in Principles of Islam College, were dismissed from al-Imam Muhammad ibn Sa'ud Islamic University on the basis of their membership in the Committee.

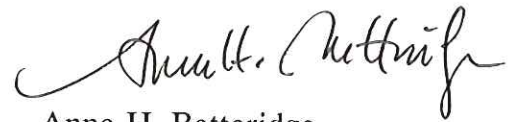
We are also concerned that **Shaikh Hamad al-Salaifih**, a senior official in the Ministry of Education, was dismissed from his position and that the law offices of **Shaikh Abdullah al-Mas'ari** and **Sulaiman ibn Abdullah al-Rushudi** were closed on May 13, all as a result of their membership in the above-mentioned Committee.

If the reports are correct that the persons who founded the Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights on May 3, 1993, were engaged in non-violent efforts to promote the rule of law and freedom of speech, then their dismissal from their positions, the closure of their law offices, and the arrest of their spokesman would breach basic principles of international human rights law and academic freedom. The freedom to express ideas, either individually or in association with others, without fear of punishment or loss of employment, is central to academic life.

We respectfully request that the university and government not dismiss and arrest faculty members who engage in the non-violent expression of views. We urge you to ensure that Dr. al-Mas'ari be allowed visits by members of his family and his lawyer, and to reconsider his arrest. We also urge you to reconsider the dismissal of Drs. al-Mas'ari, al-Tawaijri, and al-Hamed, and to reinstate them in their university positions.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your response.

Respectfully,



Anne H. Betteridge
Executive Director

AHB/sp

cc: Crown Prince Abdallah ibn Abdel Aziz al-Saud
Prince Nayef ibn Abdel Aziz al-Saud, The Minister of the Interior
Prince Saud al-Faisal, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Prince Bandar ibn Sultan, Ambassador to the United States of America
David Welch, Charge d'Affairs, Embassy of the United States of America
Dr. Abdel Aziz al-Khauwaiter, Minister of Higher Education
Dr. Ahmed al-Dhubaib, President, King Saud University
Prince Salman ibn Abdel Aziz, Governor of Riyadh