



Middle East Studies Association of North America, Inc.

The University of Arizona · 1232 North Cherry Avenue · Tucson, Arizona 85721

1 December 1994

Prince Naif bin 'Abdul-'Aziz
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
PO Box 2833
Airport Road
Riyadh 11134
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Excellency:

The Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association is concerned to have learned of the recent incarceration of two professors at the Imam Muhammad bin Saud University in Riyadh, Dr. Abdullah al-Hamed and Dr. Muhsin al-'Awaji.

The Middle East Studies Association comprises 2400 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.

It is our understanding that both professors were arrested on 8 September 1994 by al-Mabahith al-'Amma, the general intelligence agency, in conjunction with their writings on legitimate rights (*al-huquq al-shar'iyah*). We fear that their arrests have resulted merely from expression of political opinions. Both men had already been detained for several months in 1993, and during that time Dr. Muhsin al-'Awaji was tortured and deprived of sleep. Following their recent arrest, both men have apparently been removed to an undisclosed location, a fact which raises the gravest concerns for their physical well-being.

With great urgency, thus the Committee on Academic Freedom seeks your immediate assurance that both men are being treated humanely and that they have access to family members, defense counsel, and medical doctors. Further, we respectfully ask you to extend measures of clemency to these two men. Freedom of thought and expression is an essential component of the academic enterprise, and it would appear that our colleagues have been imprisoned solely for the exercise of rights that are inscribed in international law.

Sincerely,


Anne H. Betteridge
Executive Director

cc: Prince Saud al-Faisal bin 'Abdul 'Aziz, Minister of Foreign Affairs