



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

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30 May 2008

HRH Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud
Minister of Interior
Ministry of Interior
PO Box 2933
Riyadh 11134
The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

via fax 011-966-1-403-1185

Your Highness:

I write to you on behalf of the Middle East Studies Association of North America and its Committee on Academic Freedom to express our deep concern over the arrest and detention of Professor Matrook Al-Faleh of the Department of Political Science at King Saud University. Professor Al-Faleh was taken some time after leaving his house on May 19, 2008. His family and associates report that his arrest has not been explained, nor have they been informed of any charges against him. Professor Al-Faleh has been arrested and tried in the past for expressing his political opinions and advocating reforms in Saudi Arabia, though he was finally pardoned.

The Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) was founded in 1966 to promote scholarship and teaching on the Middle East and North Africa. The preeminent organization in the field, the Association publishes the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and has more than 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.

MESA's Committee on Academic Freedom takes particular interest in Professor Al-Faleh's case because he was awarded MESA's academic freedom award in November 2004. At that time, MESA cited him for "his courageous and principled stance" and further proclaimed that "he and his colleagues have made a brave stand in favor of freedom of speech and academic freedom, and they deserve our support and our admiration."

We urge you to accord Professor Al-Faleh his full rights to express himself both politically and academically—the same rights that he advocates so forcefully for others. We also ask, on behalf of our organization, that you ensure that Professor Al-Faleh be granted access to a lawyer, be released promptly or be charged with a criminal offense, and if he is charged, that he be tried before a court that meets international fair trial standards.

We look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

Mervat F. Hatem
MESA President
Professor of Political Science, Howard University

cc:

His Excellency Adel A. Al-Jubeir, Saudi Ambassador to the United States
King Saud University, Department of Political Science