

american political science association

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27 June 2005

His Majesty King Fahd bin 'Abdul' Azziz Al-Saud
Office of H.M. The King, Royal Court Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
c/o Ambassador Prince Bandar Bin Sultan
Fax No: 202-944-3113

Your Majesty:

Some fifteen months ago, then President of the American Political Science Association, Dr. Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, Professor Emeritus of the University of Chicago, wrote to you on behalf of the Association's more than 15,000 U.S. and international political scientist members.

Dr. Rudolph expressed our extreme concern and disappointment about press reports indicating that your government had arrested eleven prominent academics including one of our political science colleagues, Dr. Matrouk al-Falih at King Sa'ud University in Riyadh. He and his colleagues had been arrested for criticizing the National Commission on Human Rights (NCHR) and for apparently planning to establish their own human rights organizations as a means of providing more independence from the government. Other reports indicated they were arrested "for circulating a petition that called for the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in Saudi Arabia." From the vantage point of the American Political Science Association, political scientists inherently have an interest in issues of governance which would made the arrests and detentions an issue of academic freedom.

The arrests and detention of these individuals constituted a violation of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

We have now learned that he was tried and sentenced last month to six years in prison. The new facts make the cause for my current letter as Dr. Rudolph's successor to the presidency of the Association all the more important, our disappointment in the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia all the greater, and our request for action on your part all the more urgent.

Your Majesty, we live in a world where the resolution of political differences is far too frequently pursued through violence or actions which divest scholars and critics of their rights to pursue knowledge and to their free expression of

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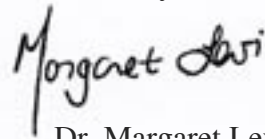
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political dissent. By aligning itself with the United States and the broader international community against the use of terror, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has recognized the need to resolve political differences through legal avenues.

There is a level of transparency in today's world by which governments are inevitably held to account in the court of public opinion. The arrest, detention, and now incarceration of prisoners of conscience, individuals who were held and convicted solely for the non-violent exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association, is not worthy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We hope you are in agreement and look forward to the retraction of this conviction and the restoration of Dr. Matrouk al-Falih's rights.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Levi". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dr. Margaret Levi, President
American Political Science Association

cc: His Excellency
Crown Prince and First Deputy Prime Minister
Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud
Royal Court Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

His Excellency
Dr. 'Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Abraham Al-Sheikh
Minister of Justice
University Street, Riyadh 11137
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