

September 4, 2018

His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud
King of Saudi Arabia and Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques
Office of His Majesty the King
Royal Court
Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Re: Dr. Hatoon al-Fassi

Your Majesty:

The American Historical Association has grave concerns for the well-being of Dr. Hatoon al-Fassi, an associate professor of history at King Saud University, who is currently detained. I respectfully urge you to call on the appropriate authorities to release Dr. al-Fassi immediately.

Scholars at Risk has informed us that authorities detained Dr. al-Fassi between June 21 and 24, 2018, apparently because of her activism on behalf of women's rights. At the time she was taken into custody, Dr. al-Fassi was reportedly under a travel ban. The circumstances surrounding her arrest remain unclear. Public information regarding Dr. al-Fassi's current status, including her location, a possible court date, whether she has counsel, or the specific charges against her, if any, is unavailable.

Absent any additional information, we can conclude only that Dr. al-Fassi is being detained as a result of the nonviolent exercise of the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association—conduct that is expressly protected under international human rights instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Saudi Arabia is a party.

The American Historical Association, the largest organization of professional historians in the world with approximately 12,500 members spanning the globe, therefore respectfully urges you to direct the appropriate authorities to release our colleague Dr. al-Fassi and otherwise to ensure that any case against her proceeds in a manner consistent with Saudi Arabia's obligations under international law, including those relating to due process and fair trial.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MBL' followed by a horizontal line.

Mary Beth Norton
President

CC:

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