

US professor arrested and held in Israel

Mark d'Alessandro
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Ghazi-Walid Falah, associate professor of geography at the University of Akron in Akron, Ohio, was arrested in Israel on July 8. An internationally known and respected scholar of Middle Eastern geography, Dr. Falah remains detained without charge and without access to legal counsel.

Dr. Falah holds dual Canadian and Israeli citizenship and works in the US with permanent resident alien status. He has been denied access to consulate staff from either the United States or Canada or from other visitors. According to the Associated Press, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack could only confirm that Dr. Falah is an Israeli citizen.

On July 17, Israeli authorities denied Dr. Falah access to a lawyer for a further 10 days and issued a gag order to prevent the Israeli media from reporting on Dr. Falah's case.

Palestinian by birth, Dr. Falah was visiting his elderly mother who is hospitalized with a brain tumor in Haifa, Israel's third largest city. Dr. Falah was taking pictures in the nearby popular tourist resort at Nahariya while on a break from visiting his mother in the hospital when he was taken into custody.

"We need to know where he is, why he's being held," said Naail Falah, 23, professor Ghazi Falah's son.

Dr. Falah has a long and distinguished career in US, Canadian and British academics. He earned his doctorate in Geography from the University of Durham (UK), in 1982, and is author of the popular Arab-language book, *The Forgotten Palestinians: Arab An Naqab, 1906-1986*, published in 1987. He recently received a grant from the Beirut-based Institute of Palestinian Studies to update the book through 2006. Additionally, Dr. Falah authored two other books and numerous articles in such prestigious academic journals as *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *Antipode* and *Political Geographer*.

Prominent academics throughout the United States, Canada, and Britain are rallying to Dr. Falah's defense. Email listservs of professional geography associations in all three countries have been flooded with correspondence between and among geographers and other scientists expressing concern for Dr. Falah's situation and health.

The arrest of Professor Ghazi-Walid Falah is a demonstration that the war of aggression launched by Israel on Lebanon coincides with attacks on basic democratic rights within Israel itself. The holding of Professor Falah—an Israeli citizen—without charge, and the barring of legal counsel, violates articles 10, 12, and 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Israel is a signatory.



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