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**THE SENATE
STATE OF ARKANSAS**

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JOINT BUDGET
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SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & YOUTH

December 19, 2025

I and the undersigned members of the Arkansas Senate issue this statement of strong support for the University of Arkansas's ongoing investigations related to the King Fahd Center for Middle East Studies. This action underscores our commitment to adherence to Arkansas law, academic integrity, institutional accountability, and the responsible use of public resources in higher education.

As a public institution, the University of Arkansas has a clear legal obligation under state law to ensure proper stewardship of resources, prevent misuse of official university affiliations and materials, and maintain the highest ethical standards in research and administration. The current investigation upholds these obligations. We are particularly concerned about Assistant Professor Saeidi's and the King Fahd Center's compliance with Arkansas law, including the Arkansas ACCESS Act, which promotes common sense in higher education by prohibiting the compulsion of certain beliefs and fostering unbiased learning environments; Act 116 prohibiting discrimination or preferential treatment in public institutions of higher education and elsewhere; and Act 721 addressing antisemitism in public institutions. These laws ensure that state-supported programs remain free from ideological bias, foreign propaganda, and activities that could undermine academic objectivity or public trust.

The investigation stems from serious allegations against Assistant Professor Saeidi, including the misuse of university letterhead to advocate for the release of Hamid Nouri—a former Iranian prison official convicted of war crimes in Sweden—as well as questions regarding her research. Another significant concern arises from Assistant Professor Saeidi's reaction to Arkansas State Senator Dan Sullivan's straightforward request for publicly accessible syllabi from nine courses linked to the King Fahd Center for Middle East Studies. While still director of the center, Assistant Professor Saeidi posted the following statement on X: "To the Arkansas State Legislature: You were unable to punish me because of the Zionist proxies who gave you money and know your secrets, and now you are attacking the Middle East Studies Center and my colleagues. Let me tell you something: This matter has now turned into an international dispute, Friends, please repost this to protect us."

These unsubstantiated accusations by Assistant Professor Saeidi are inflammatory and may constitute a violation of Arkansas Act 721 of 2025, which prohibits antisemitism in state-supported institutions of higher education. Furthermore, her portrayal of the Arkansas legislature as influenced by "Zionist" interests is amplified by her repost of another user's message: "Replying to @saeidi944101... Warm blood, brave one, drive the dagger from Doha into the throats of the Zionist, so that all of them howl." This endorsement of violent rhetoric directed at "Zionists" raises serious questions about compliance with the state's antisemitism prohibitions.

The University of Arkansas is taking necessary steps to ensure it complies with state law, fulfills transparency obligations, and upholds the highest standards of academic conduct.

The administration is to be commended for prioritizing the integrity of our state's flagship institution over external pressures. Our endorsement comes amid misguided criticisms from foreign and ideological entities. The Tehran Times, an Iranian state-controlled media outlet, published an article titled "Silencing Shirin Saeidi, Belying Claims" on December 16, 2025, falsely portraying the university's actions as an attack on free speech and a suppression of criticism against Israel. This narrative is nothing more than propaganda from a regime notorious for suppressing dissent, executing political prisoners, and sponsoring terrorism. The irony cannot be gainsaid.

Similarly, the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) issued a letter on December 16, 2025, through its Committee on Academic Freedom decrying the university's decision to remove Saeidi from her administrative position as a violation of academic freedom. But MESA's response remarkably minimizes the gravity of the allegations against Saeidi--undermining any impression that MESA could claim of objectivity. We highly value scholarly rights too, but we also recognize that they don't preclude the enforcement of appropriate university policies when serious violations have occurred.

We, the undersigned members of the Arkansas Senate, will not stand idly by as hostile-foreign nations' propaganda arms and organizations unwilling to objectively address the facts unfairly criticize. Our universities must remain bastions of truth and excellence. We are confident that the University of Arkansas will complete its investigation thoroughly and impartially and take whatever actions, if any, are appropriate to the conclusions reached as a result of the inquiry.

We remain dedicated to supporting higher education institutions that foster innovation, critical thinking, ethical research and compliance with Arkansas law. This investigation is a vital step in maintaining public trust in our academic community.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Sullivan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dan" being more prominent than the last name "Sullivan".

Dan Sullivan
State Senator
District 20

ZB

John B. ...

Arnold ...

St. ...

Bob ...

Tyler ...

R

Gene ...

Carl ...

B. ...

Kim D. ...

Bob ...

Ricky Hill

Mason Devine

Blair

Paul Johnson

Matt Ryan

John Payne

Jon Pott

Mike

David Ray Wallace

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