

An open letter to the President of KAUST: Sunday Jan 18th, 2015.

Professor Jean-Lou Chameau
President
King Abdullah University of Science and Technology

Dear Professor Chameau

When the new 'King Abdullah University of Science and Technology' was inaugurated in 2009 it was recognised as a visionary attempt to 'rekindle science in the Islamic world'. To mark the significance of the occasion, His Majesty King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia invited heads of state and Nobel laureates to participate. The undersigned continue to take a profound and sympathetic interest in this visionary undertaking. As members of the international scientific and scholarly community we owe it to KAUST to assist it in becoming a leading institution for education and research. All such academies have the right to assistance from others, world-wide, and everyone is heavily dependent on receiving that assistance.

We write out of concern that the fabric of international cooperation may be torn apart by dismay at the severe restrictions on freedom of thought and expression still being applied to Saudi Arabian society. We have no doubt that members of KAUST share that concern, aware that the cruel sentence passed, for example, on Mr. Raif Badawi who established a forum for open discussion, sent a shock around the world. We take real hope from the fact that the government of Saudi Arabia, responding to international outcry, is re-considering that sentence.

It is in this context of a new willingness to listen to pleas on behalf of tolerance that we write to you today. We are confident that influential voices in KAUST will be heard arguing for the freedom to dissent, without which no institution of higher learning can be viable. The time is ripe for new thinking after millions in Paris, supported by the government of Saudi Arabia, demonstrated on behalf of minority views. We are aware that change comes by degrees, but we write at this time since it seems, a mere five years into KAUST's history, to be a crucial time for KAUST. The undersigned friends of KAUST will be there to support you in asserting the values of freedom that we are all agreed are essential to the future of a University in this twenty first century, and that will determine the success of the extraordinary venture which you lead.

Sincerely

Martin Chalfie	Nobel Laureate Chemistry US
John Coetzee	Nobel Laureate Literature Australia/South Africa
Claude Cohen-Tannoudji	Nobel Laureate Physics France
Richard Ernst	Nobel Laureate Chemistry Switzerland
Gerhard Ertl	Nobel Laureate Chemistry Germany
Shelly Glashow	Nobel Laureate Physics US
Dudley Herschbach	Nobel Laureate Chemistry US
Roald Hoffmann	Nobel Laureate Chemistry US
Brian Josephson	Nobel Laureate Physics UK
Martin Karplus	Nobel Laureate Chemistry US
Harold Kroto	Nobel Laureate Chemistry UK/US
Yuan Lee	Nobel Laureate Chemistry Taiwan/US
Rudy Marcus	Nobel Laureate Chemistry Canada/US
John Polanyi	Nobel Laureate Chemistry Canada
Richard Roberts	Nobel Laureate Physiology or Medicine US
John Sulston	Nobel Laureate Physiology or Medicine UK
Jack Szostak	Nobel Laureate Physiology or Medicine US
Eric Wieschaus	Nobel Laureate Physiology or Medicine US

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