

Nottingham
Students for
**SCHOLARS
AT RISK**

advocacy

**Bahraini scholar of mechanical engineering,
award-winning human rights defender and
blogger, sentenced to life in prison in 2011
after participating in a pro-democracy protest.**



**FREE DR AL-
SINGACE**



Presentation

- Who are we?
- Who is Dr Al-Singace?
- What happened to him?
 - Pattern of harassment and intimidation by State authorities over his human rights activism
 - Arrest and detention without due process
 - Trial in violation of international human rights law
 - Appalling conditions of detention
 - On hunger strike since July 2021 – almost 3 years
- What is being done about this case?
 - International advocacy – SAR, AI, HRW, BIRD, etc
 - UK government
- What are Nottingham students for SAR doing for this case?
- How can you help?
- Discussion

Who are we? - Nottingham Students for SAR

What is Scholars at Risk (SAR)?

- Int'l network of institutions founded in the US in 1999
- Protects persecuted scholars (incl. students); advocates for academic freedom globally, i.e., the freedom to think, question, and share ideas

Who are Nottingham Students for SAR?

- Student advocates at the Human Rights Law Centre, representing Scholars at Risk at UoN
- Each year, we advocate on behalf of a persecuted and unjustly imprisoned scholar as part of SAR's 'Scholars in Prison' project
- This year, we are raising awareness about Dr Al-Singace's case and advocating for his release



Who is Dr. Al-Singace?

- Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace is a award-winning Bahraini scholar (retired professor of mechanical engineering), prominent blogger and human rights activist.
 - He promoted human rights as a member and leader of multiple political societies, including Al-Wefaq and the Haq Movement for Liberty and Democracy.
 - He also [used his blog, Al-Faseelah, to advocate against human rights violations in Bahrain.](#)
- He has been an outspoken advocate for democracy and human rights in Bahrain throughout his life.
- Award winning
 - 2023 ‘Academic Freedom Award from Middle East Studies Association (MESA)’ for his “courage and steadfastness in the face of more than a decade of repression and torture.”
 - 2022 ‘International Writer of Courage’ - part of the PEN Pinter prize, which goes to an author deemed to have fulfilled Harold Pinter’s aspiration to “define the real truth of our lives and our societies”.
PEN= an organisation advocating for writers and journalists who are being persecuted because of their work
- During a seminar at the UK House of Lords in 2010, he described the deteriorating human rights situation in Bahrain, speaking at length about the ‘triad of suppression’ (quote on next slide).

Who is Dr. Al-Singace?

“[There are] three pillars ensuring that activists and NGOs who work on exposing violations are seized and [condemned] somehow, ensuring that they are suppressed. The first is the use of force, torture and ill-treatment. [The] second is the use of the law. And [the] third is the judicial apparatus and procedures.”

- Al-Singace during a seminar at the UK House of Lords



What happened to him? – Harrasment & Intimidation

- Previously arrested, detained and tortured for his human rights activism
 - **2009** - arrested for his alleged “involvement in a terror plot” and for allegedly “promoting hostility and hatred toward the regime through his blog”, which the government later blocked. He was released after 3 months in detention following a royal pardon.
 - **2010** – arrested at the airport on arrival after delivering his speech to the UK House of Lords; charged with “abusing freedom of expression and opinion” by allegedly “encouraging violent and radical activities against the regime”. He was held in solitary confinement and subjected to both physical and mental torture. Released after 6 months in detention, following another pardon.
- In **2011**, he participated peacefully in a pro-democracy protest in Bahrain. He was among 13 opposition activists to be arrested for their roles in the pro-democracy protest movement.

This time, he was sentenced to life in prison. He has now been in detention for 13 years.



What happened to him? – Arrest without due process

- On 17 March 2011 at 3 a.m., dozens of security officers raided Dr. Al-Singace's home, arrested him, and took him to a police station at gunpoint
- He was not presented with an arrest warrant, nor was he informed of the charges against him.
- He was later transferred to a military prison and subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including forced standing, verbal and sexual assault, beatings and prolonged solitary confinement.



What happened to him? – Trial violating human rights

- Dr Al-Singace's trial has been widely condemned as unfair by both Bahraini and international commentators
 - Sentenced to life in prison for allegedly “plotting to topple the government”. Evidence used against him was obtained during torture.
 - Unable to see his lawyer to prepare his defence for either his initial hearing, or subsequent appeals and reviews.
 - Initially tried in a military court as a civilian – military law applies; less protections (the case was retried in a civilian court in April 2012, but sentence was upheld, and again on further appeal to a higher court.
- As a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Bahrain is bound by Article 14 which guarantees the right to a fair trial and associated safeguards
 - Article 14(a) – right to be informed of a charge against him
 - Article 14(b) - right to have adequate facilities to prepare his defence, including communicating with a lawyer

What happened to him? – Conditions in Detention

- Torture is prohibited universally and this applies to ALL STATES. The prohibition is strict and cannot be derogated from – it binds all States regardless of treaties signed or national laws.
- Dr Al-Singace was subjected to torture and other gross ill-treatment during his arrest and pre-trial period.
- He has also been subject to torture and other gross ill-treatment while in detention:
 - Persistent harassment by guards
 - sexual assault
 - being placed in what is effectively solitary confinement for long periods of time
 - denied of visits from his family
 - denied healthcare despite his advanced age (62yrs), having post-polio syndrome as well as well as many other pre-existing and new health conditions
 - denied hygienic products



What happened to him? – Hunger Strike

- In 2021, he began a hunger strike, protesting his ill-treatment in Jau prison and demanding the return of an academic book to his family.
- This confiscated book is not political in nature- it is about Bahraini dialects of Arabic. He worked on it for 4 years, handwriting and researching it in prison. Authorities refuse to hand it back to his family.
- Almost 3 years later, he continues that hunger strike and his health is deteriorating.



#FreeAlSingace

Dr. Abduljalil AlSingace
has been on a hunger
strike for 300 days.

He must be released!

SCHOLARS AT RISK
NETWORK

protection advocacy learning

What is being done about this case? – Int'l Advocacy

The international community, including the UN and leading human rights organisations, have continually raised his case and called for his immediate and unconditional release.

Scholars at Risk

- Advocates for Dr Al-Singace both privately and publically as part of their Scholars in Prison project
- Staying in contact with his family receiving updates on his case and what he is telling his family about his conditions in prison
- Created a joint letter sent to Bahraini authorities calling for his release
- Have repeatedly raised the issue calling for his immediate release, such as on first and second year anniversary of his hunger strike
- Joined other human rights groups in urging parliamentarians to raise the issue of Dr Al-Singace's inhumane conditions in prison publically in the 146th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly last year.
- All the things they've done Use summarised info from the ff links:
- What is the Scholars in prison project? - <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/action/scholars-in-prison-project/>
- What SAR has been doing - <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/tag/abduljalil-al-singace/>

What is being done about this case? – Int'l Advocacy

International Agencies & Organisations

- UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders – [Bahrain: UN expert alarmed by health of human rights defenders in prison | OHCHR](#); [Bahrain: UN expert alarmed by prolonged detention of human rights defenders | OHCHR](#)
- UN Working Group on Arbitrary detention in 2023 found his detention to be arbitrary, i.e., without proper legal basis and therefore unlawful - [A/HRC/WGAD/2023/2 \(ohchr.org\)](#)
- European Parliament - [MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION on The case of human rights defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja in Bahrain | B9-0558/2022 | European Parliament \(europa.eu\)](#)

NGOs

- Amnesty International - [Bahrain: Release unjustly jailed ailing prisoner after year of hunger strike - Amnesty International](#)
- Joint letter signed by SAR, HRW, BIRD, CIVICUS, REDRESS, Americans for Democracy and HR in Bahrain, etc [Joint Letter: Free Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace after a Year and Half of Hunger Strike | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](#)
- Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain - [ADHRB at #HRC54: Al-Singace, Al-Khawaja, and Naji Fateel, face reprisals including medical neglect | Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain](#)

What is being done about this case? – UK Gov't

- The ongoing detention of Bahraini political prisoners like Dr Al-Singace was discussed in UK Parliament in January 2022.
- Some MPs condemned the UK government for continuing financial support to Bahrain through the Gulf strategy fund and showed support for the plight of Al-Singace and other political prisoners.
- Other MPs rejected the idea that there were political prisoners in Bahrain at all, fully supporting the Bahrain government because they are an ally to the UK.
- The Nottingham East MP, Nadia Whitomme has shown some support - signing a motion last February calling for the suspension of the fund and acknowledging Bahrain's breaches of international law
- However the UK Gov continues to give financial support to Bahrain under the Gulf Strategy Fund

Gulf Strategy fund – a system of financial support given by the UK to Bahrain to fund different project areas in the Bahrain, benefitting the UK as it is economically advantageous to have links to Bahrain.

What are Nottingham students for SAR doing?

What we are calling for

- Drop all charges against him and direct his immediate and unconditional release
- Improvement to conditions in prison and return his academic book to his family to end his hunger strike
- Access to healthcare and support for his disability

- What we are doing – our advocacy campaign
- Awareness raising across students at Nottingham with our stands in Portland: last Monday as well as another coming up next Monday- 4th March. (Thank you to Amnesty Soc for booking the slots for us!)
- Local advocacy - magazine article we are writing
- Social media campaign

How can you help? – SCAN QR CODE

- SIGN - SAR's joint letter urging authorities for an improvement to his conditions in prison and his ultimate release, by scanning the QR code, clicking 'Sign The Letter' and entering your name and email.
- VISIT - our next stand on Portland B floor next Monday – March 4th
- FOLLOW - our social media page on Instagram and Twitter: @notts_sar-
- WRITE - a letter of support to Dr Al-Singace-linked on the QR code
- Sending letters of concern about Dr Al-Singace to MPs calling for reconsideration of the UK government's links and funding to Bahrain



Discussion

Any questions?

Suggestions for furthering our campaign?

