



BRISMES

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies, 71-75 Shelton Street, Covent Garden, London WC2H 9JQ

Email: office@brismes.org

Website: www.brismes.ac.uk

King of Bahrain, Sheikh Hamad bin 'Issa Al Khalifa
Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa
Minister of Interior, Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa
Minister of Education, Dr Majid bin Ali Al Nuami

Via The Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain in London

By email: communication@bahrainembassy.co.uk

4 January 2023

Your Highness Sheikh Hamad bin 'Issa Al Khalifa,

We write on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) to express our concern about the ongoing imprisonment of Bahraini academic Dr. Abduljalil al-Singace and the violations of his academic freedom.

Founded in 1973, BRISMES is the largest national academic association in Europe focused on the study of the Middle East and North Africa. It is committed to supporting academic freedom and freedom of expression, both within the region and in connection with the study of the region, both in the UK and globally.

Dr Al-Singace has been imprisoned since 2011 for his role in peaceful protests calling for democratic reform in Bahrain. His imprisonment violates his rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly that are guaranteed in Article 23 and Article 27, respectively, of the Bahraini constitution. Prior to his detention, he taught engineering at the University of Bahrain. We understand that he started a hunger strike on 8th July 2021 and one year later was still refusing solid foods.¹

Dr Al-Singace's hunger strike was in response to the confiscation by prison authorities of a book manuscript on Bahraini dialects of Arabic that he has spent four years researching and writing while incarcerated. Freedom of scientific research is guaranteed by Article 23 of the Bahraini constitution. Also, Article 24 guarantees freedom of the press, printing and publishing. The Ministry of Interior Ombudsperson declared that his book could not be returned to him or his family, despite a November 2021 legal decision confirming the apolitical nature of his work. According to Human Rights Watch, an Ombudsman representative visited Al-Singace in March 2022, making baseless allegations about the content of the book and asking him to resubmit it for approval.²

¹<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/07/bahrain-release-unjustly-jailed-ailing-prisoner-after-year-of-hunger-strike/>

²<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/13/joint-letter-free-abduljalil-al-singace>



BRISMES

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies, 71-75 Shelton Street, Covent Garden, London WC2H 9JQ

Email: office@brismes.org

Website: www.brismes.ac.uk

We note that Dr Al-Singace furthermore has a range of complex health needs and understand that he is not receiving adequate care while in prison. Concerns about Dr Al-Singace's health and well-being have been raised by numerous prominent organisations, including Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy,³ Human Rights Watch,⁴ Amnesty International⁵ and PEN International,⁶ among many others. Furthermore, Dr Al-Singace's situation has been the subject of numerous interventions by multiple United Nations Rapporteurs, as documented in their letter of 30th December 2021.⁷

The BRISMES Committee on Academic Freedom echoes these concerns about his health and well-being. Specifically, we note that his imprisonment for exercising his right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, the confiscation of his manuscript and the refusal to return it to him or to his family constitute clear violations of Dr Al-Singace's academic freedom.

We therefore write to you to respectfully request his immediate and unconditional release, to ensure that he receives appropriate medical care, that his academic work be returned and that he be able to continue his research and publish his academic works in Bahrain.

We look forward to your response before Monday 13th February, after which date BRISMES intends to publish this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Neve Gordon
Vice-President, BRISMES
On behalf of BRISMES Committee on Academic Freedom

³ <https://birdbh.org/2022/08/timeline-dr-abduljalil-alsingaces-hunger-strike/>

⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/13/joint-letter-free-abduljalil-al-singace>

⁵ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/5232/2022/en/>

⁶ <https://pen-international.org/news/joint-letter-to-bahrain-king>

⁷ <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=26918>