

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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BAHRAIN: JOINT LETTER: FREE DR. ABDULJALIL AL-SINGACE AFTER TWO YEAR OF HUNGER STRIKE

To: King of Bahrain, King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa,
Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa,

Your Majesties,

We, the undersigned, write to you again to express grave concern for the well-being of Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace, an academic, award-winning human rights defender and blogger serving a life sentence in Bahrain solely for exercising his rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

We previously wrote to you on January 15, 2023, and August 13, 2022, urging you to secure Dr. Al-Singace's immediate and unconditional release and, in the meantime, ensure that he receives adequate health care, is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and that his academic work be transferred to his family. Our requests have neither been met nor acknowledged, and Dr. Al-Singace's deteriorating health is one of increasing concern.

July 8, 2023, marks an astounding two years since Dr. Al-Singace began his hunger strike in response to the prison authorities' confiscation of his manuscript on Bahraini dialects of Arabic that he spent four years researching and writing. During his hunger strike, he has been sustaining himself only on multivitamin liquid supplements, tea with milk and sugar, water, and salts.

Dr. Al-Singace has been held in solitary confinement within his room in Kanoo Medical Centre, where he has been prohibited from going outside, exposure to direct sunlight, and receiving the physiotherapy he requires for his disability. He has also been deprived of necessary examinations, including MRI scans of the shoulder and head, physiotherapy, and treatment for joints, vision, prostate, and tremors. Authorities have refused to provide Dr. Al-Singace with necessary items, such as medical slippers to prevent falling in the bathroom and a hot water bottle to relieve pain.

The deliberate denial of healthcare has placed Dr. Al-Singace's life in grave danger and amounts to a failure to provide healthcare in line with Bahrain's obligations under international human rights law. His treatment also constitutes a violation of the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

As of June 23, 2023, Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace decided to suspend family visits and telephone calls, the only means of communication with his family, in protest of continued medical negligence and prevention of treatment in light of his declining medical condition. Additionally, authorities continue to limit his access to information by banning English and Arabic newspapers and reducing the number of accessible TV channels.

The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) adopted an opinion on Dr. Al-Singace's case during its ninety-sixth session on 27 March–5 April 2023. The ruling confirms repeated allegations of torture at the hands of the Bahraini government, states that his arrest was unlawful, and finds that he was "*subjected to enforced disappearance*" (Para 80).

Dr. Al-Singace's case "follow[s] a familiar pattern of arrest without a warrant, pretrial detention with limited access to judicial review, denial of access to lawyers, forced confessions, torture and ill-treatment and denial of medical care. The Working Group recalls that, under certain circumstances, widespread or systematic imprisonment or other severe deprivation of liberty in violation of the rules of international law may constitute crimes against humanity" (Para 112). These damning findings illustrate clear breaches of international law and necessitate the immediate release of Dr. Al-Singace.

In light of the above, we renew our call for you to release Dr. Al-Singace immediately and unconditionally, and in the meantime, to ensure he is held in conditions that meet international standards, receives his medication without delay and has access to adequate healthcare, in compliance with medical ethics, and ensure that his arbitrarily confiscated research is immediately transferred to his family members.

Sincerely,

1. Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD)
2. ALQST for Human Rights
3. Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)
4. Amnesty International
5. British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES)
6. CIVICUS
7. English PEN
8. European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (ECDHR)
9. Front Line Defenders
10. Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)
11. Human Rights First
12. IFEX
13. International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
14. PEN America
15. PEN International
16. Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED)
17. REDRESS
18. Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
19. Scholars at Risk