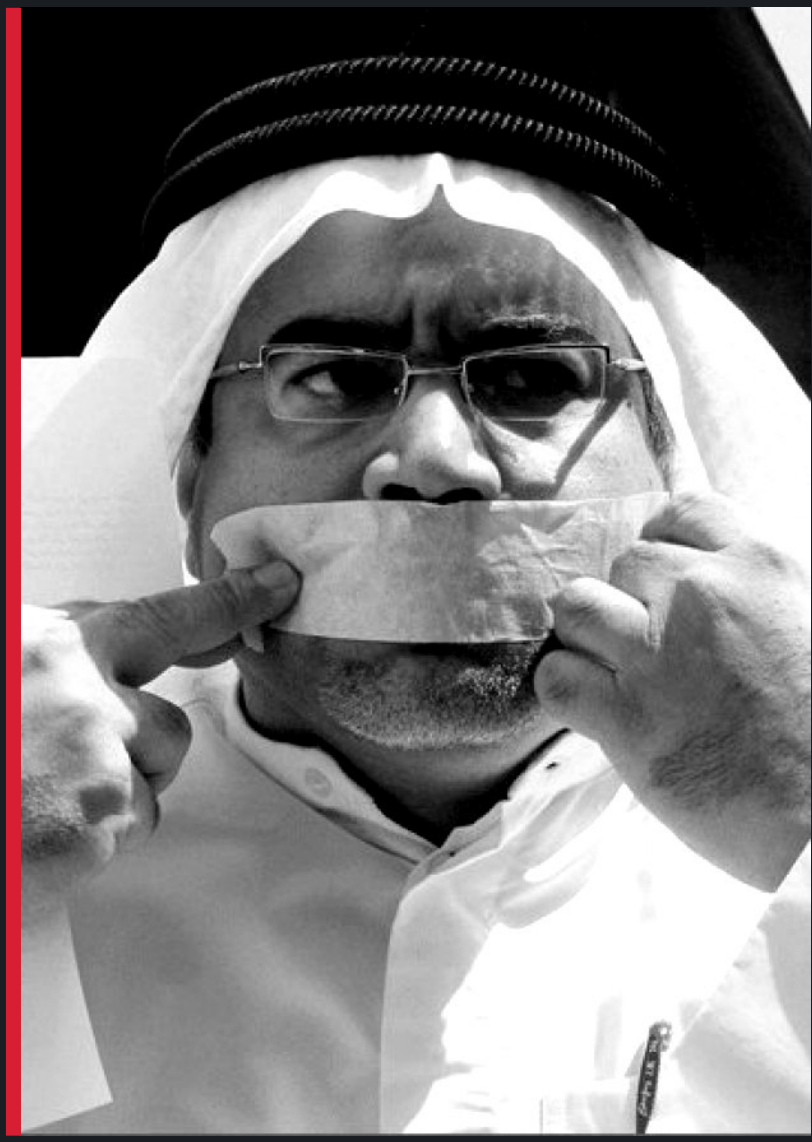
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HM-BH-2011-002



Advocacy dossier

Dr. Abduljalil al-Singace

عبد الجليل السنكيس

Imprisoned (serving sentence) **Bahrain**

Bahraini academic and human rights defender serving life imprisonment since 2011. On a liquid-only hunger strike since July 2021 in protest at the confiscation of his manuscripts.

01

The case at a glance

Bahraini academic and human rights defender serving life imprisonment since 2011. On a liquid-only hunger strike since July 2021 in protest at the confiscation of his manuscripts.

Status **Imprisoned (serving sentence)**	Arrested **17 Mar 2011**	Country **Bahrain**
Sentence Life imprisonment (June 2011, upheld on appeal 2012).		
Charges Plotting to overthrow the government; forming a terrorist organisation; broadcasting false news (tried under emergency-era National Safety Court jurisdiction).		

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Release Abduljalil Al-Singace immediately and unconditionally.

02 Drop all charges related to the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights.

03 Ensure unrestricted access to legal counsel, family, and adequate medical care while in detention.

04 Provide Abduljalil Al-Singace with immediate, independent medical evaluation and the full treatment that condition requires, including transfer to an independent civilian hospital if necessary.

02

Documented violations

Each violation and the international standard it breaks.

Arbitrary detention International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9

Denial of medical care UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules), Rules 24 to 27

Inhumane detention conditions International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 10
UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules)

Torture Convention against Torture, Articles 1, 2
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 7

Trial before an exceptional court International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14

Unfair trial International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14

03

How the case unfolded

13 August 2010

Arrest

Arrested on return from a human rights talk in the UK

He was arrested on his return to Bahrain after speaking about human rights in the United Kingdom and held for about six months.

23 February 2011

Release

Released under a royal pardon

He was freed under a royal pardon during the February 2011 protests, weeks before his next arrest.

17 March 2011

Arrest

Seized in night raid after Pearl Roundabout uprising

Security forces took him from his Manama home days after the launch of mass pro-democracy protests. He was placed in incommunicado detention and later reported torture, beatings and sexual humiliation.

22 June 2011

Conviction

Life sentence handed down by military court as part of Bahrain 13

A special National Safety Court sentenced him alongside opposition leaders, clerics and rights defenders to life imprisonment on charges related to "plotting against the state". His confession had been extracted under duress.

4 September 2012

Appeal: judgment upheld

Appeal court upholds life imprisonment

A civilian appeal court confirmed the sentence despite extensive documentation of torture, denial of counsel and the use of a military tribunal against a civilian.

7 January 2013

Final judgment

Court of Cassation makes the sentence final

The Court of Cassation upheld the sentences in the Bahrain 13 case. No further appeal is possible.

2021

Solitary confinement imposed

Held in solitary confinement at the medical facility

Rights groups report that he has been held in solitary confinement in his room at the medical facility where he is detained.

8 July 2021

Hunger strike begins

Begins liquid-only hunger strike over confiscated manuscripts

After Jaw Prison authorities seized his handwritten research on Bahraini Arabic dialects, he refused all solid food. He has sustained himself only on water, salts and vitamins since.

18 July 2021

Transfer between places of detention

Moved to hospital during hunger strike

Shortly after he began his hunger strike he was taken to hospital. He has been held in medical facilities ever since.

2023

UN opinion or decision

UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention finds his detention arbitrary

In Opinion No. 2/2023, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found his detention arbitrary. The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders later said that treatment he needs for his physical impairments had been repeatedly denied.

8 July 2023

Detention conditions and health

Two years on hunger strike in a medical facility

Two years into his hunger strike he was still held at the Muharraq specialised health-care centre, where he has been detained since July 2021. His health had seriously worsened.

16 November 2023

Award or recognition

MESA Academic Freedom Award

The Middle East Studies Association gave him its Academic Freedom Award.

3 April 2024

Call by others

28 rights groups write to Bahrain over his hunger strike

Twenty-eight rights organisations wrote to the Bahraini authorities calling for his release as his hunger strike continued.

8 July 2024

Detention conditions and health

Three years without solid food; family fears for his life

A joint letter from rights organisations warned that his refusal of nutrition had become medically unsustainable. He has continued to insist his strike will end only when his manuscripts are returned and he is released.

28 November 2025

UN opinion or decision

UN Committee against Torture demands his immediate release

In concluding observations on Bahrain, the Committee named him by name and urged the government to free him together with Hassan Mushaima and Abdulhadi al-Khawaja.

17 March 2026

Anniversary

15 years since his arrest; 19 groups call for his release

On the 15th anniversary of his arrest, 19 organisations appealed for his release. He was still held at the Muharraq facility on hunger strike, his manuscripts still withheld. Doctors had advised shoulder surgery that was not scheduled, and physiotherapy was denied.

04

The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: this record was checked against sources up to 26 October 2026. Dr Abduljalil Al-Singace remains held at the Muharraq Specialised Health Care Centre serving a life sentence, and the solid-food hunger strike he began on 8 July 2021 after his manuscript was confiscated entered its sixth year in July 2026. His Bahrain 13 co-defendants Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, Hassan Mushaima and Mohammed Habib Al-Muqdad also remain in prison, while Ebrahim Sharif was released in February 2026 after a separate case.

Background and work

Dr. Abduljalil al-Singace is a Bahraini engineer, academic and one of the most prominent voices to emerge from the country's pro-democracy movement. A former head of mechanical engineering at the University of Bahrain, he was also a leading member of the opposition Haq Movement and used his blog to document discrimination, sectarian policy and the situation of political prisoners. His scholarship later turned to the cultural fabric of Bahrain itself, including the dialects of Arabic spoken across the islands.

Arrest and detention

He was first detained in August 2010 and released the following February, only to be re-arrested on 17 March 2011, days after the launch of the Pearl Roundabout protests. Security forces took him from his home in a night raid. In the weeks that followed he was tortured, held in solitary confinement and subjected to sexual humiliation, abuse he later detailed before a military court. He has since been recognised as one of the "Bahrain 13", a group of opposition leaders, clerics and rights defenders tried together by a special military tribunal.

Conviction and imprisonment

In June 2011, the National Safety Court sentenced him to life imprisonment on charges connected to "plotting to overthrow the government" and forming a terrorist organisation. The conviction was upheld on appeal in 2012 despite credible reports of torture and a trial that fell far below international fair-trial standards. He has been imprisoned ever since, much of it at Jaw Prison, where he has documented systematic mistreatment of detainees and the denial of medical care.

Current status as of 2026

On 8 July 2021 he began an open-ended hunger strike after prison guards confiscated his handwritten research on Bahraini Arabic dialects. He has sustained himself on water, salts and vitamin supplements ever since. By July 2026 he had completed five years refusing food and more than 15 years behind bars. He is held at the Muharraq specialised health-care centre, where he suffers from tremors, chronic pain and other serious health problems. In November 2025 the UN Committee against Torture explicitly called for his release. Bahrain has not responded.

Latest updates on this case Scan the code or visit:https://humena.org/defenders/abduljalil-al-singace/

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