

SILENCING DISSENT

Side event to the 41st Regular Session of the
Human Rights Council on Freedom of Expression

25 June 2019, 10:00 – 11:30

Room XXV, Palais des Nations
United Nations Office in Geneva

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”

(Art. 19 UDHR)

“No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment....”

(Art 15 UDHR)

Panellists:

- Hatice Cengiz** writer and fiancée of Jamal Khashoggi
- Agnes Callamard** Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions at the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Abdullah Alaoudh** Senior fellow at Georgetown University and son of Salman Al-Awdah (via video link)

Yumna Desai and Huda Mohammad, former detainees of Dhaban prison

Interventions from the floor

Conclusions: **Matthew Hedges**, Scholar and former detainee

Moderator: **Niccolò A. Figà-Talamanca**, Secretary General of No Peace Without Justice

Freedom of expression and freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, are essential building blocks of a democratic society. Suppression of dissent by any State power violates the freedom of its own citizens in a flagrant breach of international human rights. Equally, holding people in degrading and inhuman ways, and in the worst case, torturing them is unacceptable for any UN member state.

Hatice Cengiz, fiancée of murdered Washington Post editorialist Jamal Khashoggi and **Abdullah Alaoudh**, son of imprisoned cleric Salman Al-Awdah, **Yumna Desai** and **Huda Mohammad**, who were detainees in the notorious Dhaban in Saudi Arabia, in the same block as women “driving” activists and are direct witnesses to inhuman and degrading treatment, will share their own stories and their analysis of the efforts to eradicate dissent and political expression by murder, torture and ill-treatment and judicial persecution, including imposing lengthy prison sentences and threatening capital punishment against citizens who dare express even the mildest of dissent. **Agnes Callamard**, Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, will present relevant segments of her latest report, which will be discussed at the Human Rights Council on the following day, including her findings on the Jamal Khashoggi murder and other extrajudicial executions aimed at silencing dissent. **Matthew Hedges**, the British scholar arrested, detained and given a life sentence in the UAE will present concluding remarks.

This side-event is organized by No Peace Without Justice and kindly hosted by the Government of Canada
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