

The Bravery of Words

A Discussion on the Right to Think and Speak in the case of Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali

Linköping University Student-led Advocacy Workshop — Final Report Winter 2024 & Spring 2025

Prepared by: Gus Sorata Watanabe Andrea Kjellin Ikechukwu Franklin Mbachu Leigh Anne Lane Elif Nur Öner Blessing Edebor Xuewen Gao

Course coordinator: Claudia Tazreiter







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Academic Freedom What is academic freedom?

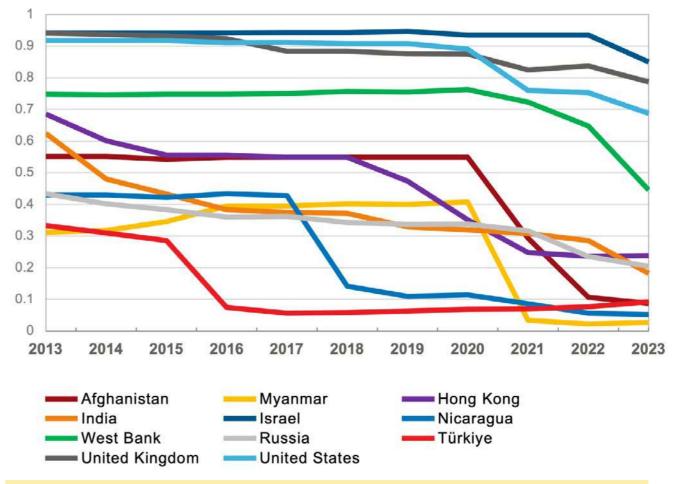
Academic freedom refers to the principles and rights that scholars, researchers and students have to freely pursue their academic interests, to research, teach and learn without interference or censorship from outside forces. This includes the ability to explore controversial or unpopular ideas, challenge established beliefs, and to engage in critical inquiry and debate. Academic freedom is essential for the advancement of knowledge and the pursuit of truth and is protected by many universities and academic institutions around the world. It also includes the protection of intellectual property rights and the right to publish and share research findings without fear of retribution or suppression. It is essential for the advancement of knowledge and critical thinking and is a cornerstone of a democratic society. Despite the importance of academic freedom for the advancement of knowledge and the pursuit of truth, in recent years, there have been concerns about threats to it, both from external forces and within academic institutions.

Challenges of academic freedom across nations

This report will explore the concept of academic freedom, its importance, and the challenges it faces. Some countries have vehemently decided that scholars will never exercise such freedom. countries like: Iran, China, Bahrain, Belarus, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, and many others. This trampling on academic freedom has led to many scholars being incarcerated in many countries, with some are convicted to a death sentence. One such case is that of Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali that this report focuses on. He is an Iranian/Swedish dual citizen, sentenced to death by the Iranian government.

This report will discuss the life and research of Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, efforts and critiques within the Swedish Parliament on his case and various related international treatise on academic freedom.

Academic Freedom Index



Global Index showing a decline in academic freedom, credit: SAR Free to think report 2024

2. 3.

Biography of Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali

Timeline of Academic career and Wrongful Detainment:

Earned PhD in disaster medicine at Karolinska University (Preparedness and Safe Hospitals:

- Medical Responses to Disasters) Visiting professor in disaster medicine at Vrije Universiteit Brussels
- · Lecturer at Università del Piemonte Orientale's Research Center in Emergency and Disaster Medicine

October 21

Convicted and sentenced to death on charges of "corruption on earth."

February 5

Request for judicial review denied by Qom branch of Iran's Supreme Court.

July 29 Blindfolded and transferred to an isolated cell in an undisclosed location.

November 24

Moved to solitary confinement and informed of execution in the coming week.

Awarded Scholars at Risk Courage to Think Award.

May 4

Multiple Iranian state media outlets report of execution by May 21.

2016 **April 25**

Arrested while attending academic workshop hosted by Iranian universities.

2017

December 20 United Nations working group

publishes opinion stating that Dr. Djalali is being arbitrarily detained and should be released

2018 **November**

Urgent operation carried out on a clutched inguinal hernia

2020

December Scholars at Risk Fellow at Harvard University

2020 **December 2**

Postponement of execution announced.

April 14 Moved out of solitary

confinement after nearly

2024 June 15

Prisoner swap between Sweden and Iran carried out. Dr. Djalali is excluded from the exchange.



Ahmadreza Djalali, private photo taken from Amnestycredit: SAR Free to think report 2024

Ahmadreza Djalali's Biography

Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali is a Swedish Iranian doctor born in northern Iran on 15 September 1971. He is an internationally renowned doctor in the field of disaster medicine who has worked with institutions and scholars from across the world. Most importantly he is also a loving husband and father. His wife, Vida Mehrannia, has vigorously worked throughout his wrongful detainment, calling for the release of her husband.



Photo of Karolinska Institute where Dr. Djalali worked, credit: Ulf Sirborn

Dr. Djalali moved to Sweden to pursue opportunities in higher education, where he was accepted into a PhD program at Karolinska Institute. His family was able to join him at this time. He successfully completed his PhD in 2012, titled "Preparedness and Safe Hospitals: Medical Responses to Disasters," and dedicated it to the people killed and affected by disasters around the world, especially the people of the city, Bam in Iran. Bam was struck by a magnitude 6.7 earthquake in 2003, killing more than 45,000 people and injuring a further 30,000.



Photo of University of Tehran, where Dr, Djalali was a guest lecturer, photo credit: Ahmadrizo, Tehran University

Dr. Djalali was detained on 24 April 2016 by Iranian authorities during an academic trip to Iran where he gave lectures at the invitation of Tehran University. He was sentenced to death on spying charges by the Iranian court in 2017, a decision, according to his lawyers, that was based on a forced confession obtained through torture. He has been imprisoned in the infamous Evin prison, where he has been repeatedly been subject to solitary confinement. While wrongly imprisoned Dr. Djalali has suffered from numerous health issues. It is reported that he has lost 24 kgs, while also suffering from malnutrition,

gastritis, hernia, and depression among other adverse health conditions. It is also thought that he may have leukemia following tests that saw his bone marrow cells greatly weakened. A planned visit to a cancer specialist in Iran was blocked by prison authorities.

Dr. Djalali has been repeatedly faced announcements of his immediate execution, only for Iranian officials to postpone the decision. In addition to solitary confinement and his physical ailments that have emerged through the period of his detention, the psychological and physical burden on Dr. Djalali is difficult to imagine and simply unjustifiable.

According to Dr. Djalali, he was detained by Iranian authorities for refusing to spy on European countries for the Iranian state who were seeking information on critical infrastructure. We must note that the detaining of academics and researchers because of their refusal to spy on their colleagues and institutions is action not isolated to Dr. Djalali. Dr. Omid Kokabee was imprisoned for five years for refusing to cooperate with Iran's nuclear weapons programme, while Dr. Hamid Babaei was imprisoned for six years for also refusing to conduct spying activities for Iran.

Throughout his wrongful incarceration, multiple organizations have advocated for Dr. Djalali's release, including Amnesty International, Scholars at Risk, and UN Human Rights experts. In addition, a group of Nobel laureates have continuously called for his release, with a letter in 2020 signed by 153 concerned academics.



Protest in Turin, Italy 2020. Photo credit: Tino Romano/Epa, via Shutterstock

Dr. Djalali and Disaster Medicine

To better demonstrate who Dr. Djalali is as a human being, we also believe that it is necessary to introduce his work as an academic and researcher. Disaster medicine is a discipline that combines both emergency medicine and disaster management, a field of medicine and health care that is specifically designed for responses to disasters. According to the United Nations Disaster Training Programme;

A disaster is a serious disruption of the functioning of a society, causing widespread human, material or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected society to cope using only its own resources.

We know full well today what such disasters constitute. The COVID-19 pandemic is one, as are the 2023 earthquakes in Turkey and Syria and the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami. What we can see then, is that Dr. Djalali works in a field that deals with important tangible issues that of the contemporary world, from global health, to climate change, and natural disasters.

What is striking about Dr. Djalali's work is the body of work that he worked on in the years leading up to his wrongful incarceration by the Iranian state. His research and publications evaluate, assess, and review existing infrastructures of disaster medicine, describing current states of emergency preparedness among first responders and hospitals and the existing educational and training curriculums on disaster medicine. This work covers both the national contexts in Sweden, Italy, and Iran while also looking at the supranational context of the European Union. We, as Master students in Ethnic and Migration Studies do not share Dr. Djalali's academic discipline, yet the importance of Dr. Djalali's work has interdisciplinary resonances of impact.

Themes and values we share



Cars parked on the streets of New Orleans on Aug. 30, 2005, flooded after Hurricane Katrina. Credit: Marty Bahamonde/FEMA

We would like to point out some of the common themes that we see in Dr Djalali's work, themes that are rooted in values we share.

- 1. Disasters, both human-made and natural can affect populations in all parts of the world. Dr. Djalali's work shows that disasters such as the devastating tsunami in the Indian Ocean of 2004 or Hurricane Katrina that devasted regions in the United States were events in remote regions. Rather they exemplify what he evaluates as immediate dangers to the countries and communities he is a part of.
- 2. Infrastructures of Emergency Preparedness are lacking globally.
- 3. Concrete Proposals to improve Emergency Preparedness for disasters. Dr. Djalali's work shows improvement remain as necessary in how academic institutions train the next generation of disaster medicine practitioners. And he doesn't stop there, but goes on to propose how circumstances can be improved.

Through his academic work, we believe that it is clear to see that Dr. Djalali is a person who cares about the world and strives to improve it. In a world where the consequences of natural and human-induced disasters leave behind death and destruction, his expertise continues to speaks to the necessity of addressing the problems we face today. Furthermore, reading his work should send shivers down the spines of various publics, as his work clearly has great relevance for the global health crisis of COVID-19 that had such massive social and economic impacts in all parts of the world. The very jurisdictions that he researched, such as Italy and Sweden, were ones that struggled to deal with the pandemic and would have potentially benefited greatly from Dr. Djalali's work. That his work was not just about identifying problems but also providing possible solutions speaks volumes about not only what kind of research he conducted, but also what kind of person he is.

In our opinion, at the core of Dr. Djalali's work is a focus on the deaths that occur after disasters, whether they be natural or human-made. He shows that this is not so merely because of the disaster event itself. Rather, there are real human and systematic reasons why so many deaths occur, linked to current systems, to training and education which can all be improved in order to prevent unnecessary deaths in the aftermath of disasters. As students of migration and ethnicity, this emphasis on finding real solutions to real problems strongly resonates with what we hope to do with our own work.

6. 7.

What is said in Sweden?

The Swedish Government has, over the years been pushed and questioned by the Swedish public, human rights organizations, as well as federal and local MPs regarding the efforts, or lack thereof, to advocate and negotiate for the release of Dr Ahmadreza Djalali. We will give an overview of the political discourse discussed in the Swedish Parliament from 2020 and onwards, with an objective of mapping the recent efforts from Swedish Foreign Affairs Committee, the Swedish Foreign Minister and the critique voiced by other MPs.

Efforts across party lines

In a combined effort across party lines, Amineh Kakabaveh, Betty Malmberg, Ola Johansson, Sofia Damm, Håkan Svenneling, Maria Nilsson, Camilla Hansén and Thomas Hammarberg submitted a motion to Parliament 05-10-2021, urging the release of Swedish political prisoners in Iran (Ahmadreza Djalali), China (Gui Minhai) and Eritrea (Dawit Isaak). This motion had two demands, the first says: "the parliament supports the motion that the Swedish government urgently shall act to release the political prisoners and push this in the government" (Regeringen 2021). The second demands that: "the parliament supports this motion and that Sweden shall push for the EU and UN to implement powerful demands on Iran and Eritrea in relation to human rights in regards to trade, bilateral agreements, humanitarian aid. And propose this in the government" (Regeringen 2021). The foreign affairs committee ruled against both demands in 2021 (Riksdagen 2021).



Photo of Evin Prison in Iran. credit: Wana News Agency / Reuters

Interpellation debate 2024

During a interpellation debate in the Swedish parliament in October 2024, foreign minister Maria Malmer Stenergard of the "Moderates party" (liberal/conservative coalition) expressed that the Swedish Prime Minister had done everything possible to get Ahmadreza Djalali to be part of the prisoner exchange with Iran earlier that year. However, according to Stenergard, Iran refused to discuss the case of Djalali because, in their view, he is not considered a Swedish citizen, as they argue through Djalalis sole Iranian citizenship at the time of his arrest. The Foreign Minister highlights that Sweden does not share this view and considers Djalali a Swedish citizen, and that it is necessary to release him from the inhumane situation that Djalali currently faces. The Foreign Minister insists that these demands have been presented to different representatives of Iran, in Stockholm and Tehran, and that the Foreign Minister is personally invested in this case and does

the best she can to get Djalali home to Sweden (Riksdagen 2024). In a voice recording to the Swedish public service television (SVT), Djalali responds to the prisoner exchange by saying "I was left in a horrible situation with imminent risk of being executed. It seems as due to my dual nationality I am considered as a second-class citizen" (Djalali in SVT 2025).

"I was left in a horrible situation with imminent risk of being executed. It seems as due to my dual nationality I am considered as a second-class citizen"

(Djalali in SVT 2025).



Caption: Swedish parliament, credit: Jakob Åkersten Brodén/TT

During this debate, politician Alireza Akhondi from the "Center party" (liberal/center-right coalition) strongly criticized the actions of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasizing to the Foreign Minister that the questions posed are those of Djalalis wife and family, present during the debate, and that they deserve a better answer. Akhoni took note that the government council "tricked" the Swedish people by waiting until after the election and the start of

summer holidays to organize the prisoner exchange of a convicted murderer (high value), in order to get two Swedish nationals' home, thereby deserting Djalali in Iranian prison. Akhoni uses the strong expression "one does not leave one of their own behind enemy lines", when speaking directly to the foreign minister, where the foreign minister finalizes the debate by ensuring that their work continues with "undiminished strength" (Riksdagen 2024).



People demostration for Ahmadreza Djalalis release 2022. Photo credit: TT news paper

Questions to the Swedish foreign minister

In 2020 a similar question was posed to the Swedish ministry and then Foreign Minister, Ann Linde, in a letter by the independent parliament member Amineh Kakabaveh regarding Dr. Djalali's case. The question asks: "will the foreign minister take initiative for Sweden to push the demands on Ahmadreza's release to the Iranian government?" (Kakabaveh 2020). The Foreign Minister yet again answers that the administration is doing everything possible to work on these cases (Linde 2020). Markus Wiechel, a politician in the Swedish democrats Party (Nationalist and right-wing populist coalition) also wrote a letter to the Foreign Minister Ann Linde in 2022, where he poses questions regarded what has been done to pressure Iran to respect Dr. Djalali's fundamental rights, and what sanctions the foreign department has

done against the Iranian treatment of Dr. Djalali. Wiechel (2022) presents his question by writing about the inhumane position the death penalty imposes on Dr. Djalali's physical and mental health. This letter is mostly focused on the death penalty and the unjust incarceration of Dr. Djalali, the lack of pressure to bring Dr. Djalali to Sweden, and only improving his conditions in Iran (Wiechel 2022). The Foreign Minister gave the standard answer: "the efforts for Ahmadreza Djalali continues with undiminished strength", and gave a reply insuring that her office



"the efforts for Dr. Djalali continues in undiminished strength"

demands Dr. Djalali's release by humanitarian reasons (Riksdagen 2022). A similar response, "the efforts for Dr. Djalali continues in undiminished strength" was given to Håkan Svenneling (Left party, /socialist coalition) when asked what initiatives had been undertaken for Dr. Djalali's healthcare and efforts to release him from the death penalty in Iran (Svennling 2019).

At the beginning of 2024, politician Helén Björklund of the Social Democratic Party asked again the questions of previous letters, regarding how the minister and Swedish government are pushing Iran to

release Dr. Djalali, and if Swedish efforts are combined with Belgium and Italy (Björklund 2024). The Foreign Minister at the time Tobias Billström (2024) responded that "efforts in his case continue in undiminished strength" and that the government is consulting the European Union and individual countries affected by the case. The continued response from the office of the ministry of foreign affairs states that Iran refuses to discuss and let the Swedish embassy reach Dr. Djalali because the Iranian government don't accept his dual citizenship, and that the Swedish government is working on the case "in undiminished strength".

Quiet diplomacy?

Multiple ministers in parliament have voiced the concerns regarding Dr. Djalali's Swedish citizenship and the death penalty in Iran, the issue of only "quiet diplomacy" and the "avoidance to responde" (Adaktusson 2020 and Parlament 2024) are some of the criticisms voiced by the opposition to describe the diplomatic non-answers from the Foreign Minister. Dr. Djalali has expressed the lack of efforts from the Swedish Government in a voice recording released in January 2025. He says:



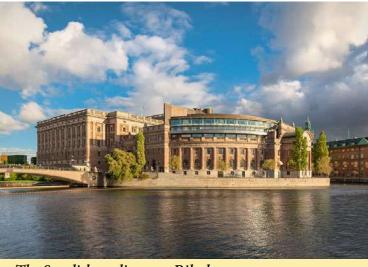
Photo of demostration in Stockholm 2022 for Ahmadreza Djalalis release. Photo credit: Jesper Cederberg for läkartidningen

"In the past nine years, Swedish authorities have ignored all the resolutions and statements issued by the UN, the Human Rights Council, and their experts, as well as Amnesty International, the EU parliament, academics and researchers, and the hundreds of thousands of signatures gathered from around the world in connection with my terrifying situation and the torture I am going through. [The Swedish authorities] . . . say they are following my case, but in reality, nothing has been done for my return back home. I remain without support despite the possibility that the worst thing could happen to me at any time — that is I could be executed. I have been left alone here. I call on the Swedish authorities to redouble their efforts so that I can return home after 3,185 days."

(Dr. Djalali, Center for Human Rights in Iran 2025).

Efforts and critiques within the Swedish Parliament

Multiple efforts across political parties have been presented in different contexts within the parliamentary discourse in Sweden. Within these processes, the Foreign Minister has been active and obligated to respond to these propositions and critiques, where a visible pattern of response is used in the Foreign Minister's rhetoric, such as: "efforts in his case continue in undiminished strength", that are predominantly used in reply to matters of critique and/or queries regarding ongoing efforts. This response can be regarded as a diplomatic non-answer which is also noted by ministers in parliament, who express frustration with the foreign minister. Through these statements Iran's refusal to acknowledge Dr. Djalali's dual citizenship are regarded as one of the main hindrances for negotiating his release. This situation creates a limbo where the Swedish Government is stripped of access to their citizens and



The Swedish parliament: Riksdagen, credit: Shutterstock

to Dr. Djalali being regarded as a non-Swede, without Swedish protection by Iran. This makes us pose the question, what can be done to protect Swedish citizens when other states don't acknowledge dual citizenship? How are/can efforts for Dr. Djalali's release work around the refusal of negotiation by Iran, how is international law applicable to this case?

International law and academic freedom

Academic freedom has come under repeated attacks from governments across the globe. To protect the rights and freedom of scholars, various laws as well as guidance principles have been passed and agreed to by the international community. Academic freedom, according to the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), is the freedom of scholars to express freely opinions about the institution or system in which they work, to do this without discrimination or fear of repression by a state or other bodies, to participate and to enjoy all the internationally recognized human rights applicable to other individuals in the same field.



logo of ICCPR, credit: Belarusian and international civil society

International law

Articles 13 (right to education) and 15 (right to scientific advancements) of the ICESCR also promotes other rights that relate to academic freedom. Article 19 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), says that member states should uphold individual rights to freedom of expression which include the right to seek, receive and give information and ideas of all kinds regardless of affiliations, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of choice. It must be noted that Iran is a state party that has agreed to these rights, and yet, they have been at the forefront of abusing them.

Academic Freedom in Iran

Iran prides itself as upholders of human rights. In Article 23 of the Iranian Constitution it states that: Investigation into one's ideas is forbidden. No one can be subjected to questioning and aggression for merely holding an opinion. The act therefore of arresting and detaining scholars by Iran goes against its own constitution.

International engagement with Iran on academic freedom

Several government and non-governmental organizations have condemned Iran's approach to academic freedom. For example, Amnesty international calls it "Iran's way of exerting diplomatic blackmail". Most international scholars who were arrested in Iran were released only via a prison swap.



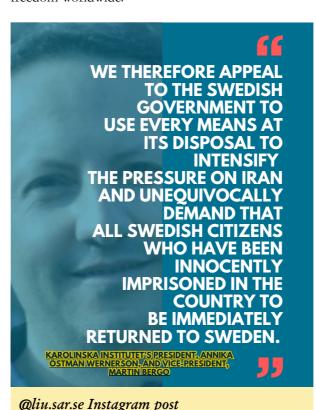
Eleanor Roosevelt holding a poster of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, November 1949. credit: UN Photo

The right to research and education for all persons without discrimination is explicitly guaranteed under several international instruments, which Iran has accepted or to which it is party, including the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education. It is also guaranteed under Iran's Constitution which is the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) further protect the rights of individuals to freedom of opinion, expression, association, and assembly, and prohibit discrimination against any person due to their race, sex, religion or belief, ethnicity, or political or other opinion.

There remain many questions that require an answer. On what bases does Iran convict and sentence scholars? Why has Iran not been sanctioned by the United Nations for its abuse of the treatise on academic freedom which Iran has adopted? Why does Iran focus so much on harassment, discrimination and wrongful imprisonment of scholars? And why does Iran convict and sentence scholars without adhering to procedures required in a criminal trial. Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali's conviction and sentencing is against the many treatises which Iran is a party to. The fight for justice continues, and Scholars at Risk will keep fighting for justice for Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali and many other imprisoned scholars all around the globe.

imprisonment, and its broader implications for academic freedom. We used infographics to simplify key facts and timelines, highlight previous activist efforts, and illustrate the ongoing international advocacy surrounding his case. We aim to make complex legal and human rights issues, such as hostage diplomacy, more accessible to a wider audience. Additionally, we dedicated posts highlighting the significance of Dr. Djalali's contributions to disaster medicine, emphasizing how his research and expertise have played a critical role in emergency preparedness and response. By showcasing his professional achievements, we aimed to reinforce the urgency of advocating for his release and underline the loss the scientific community faces due to his imprisonment.

A crucial part of our advocacy involved calls to action, directing followers to sign open letters and petitions, as well as getting involved with SAR initiatives aimed at pressuring Swedish and Iranian authorities. To amplify our message, we organized a coordinated day of action, encouraging our followers and the wider audience to post and repost advocacy materials simultaneously using the hashtag #FreeDjalali and tagging relevant accounts. Through these efforts, we hope to have collectively contributed to raising the visibility of Dr. Djalali's case, strengthened connections with other advocacy groups and individuals committed to academic freedom, and played an active role in global campaigns supporting imprisoned scholars. In doing so, we sought not only to amplify Dr. Djalali's plight but also to contribute to the broader movement for the protection of academic freedom worldwide.



@liu.sar.se Instagram post

Advocacy activities by SAR Sweden student-led workshop

Below are listed the advocacy activities that the SAR Sweden Student-led workshop, Autumn 2024-Spring 2025 undertook along with this report to bring attention to the case of Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali.

Social media campaign: @liu.sar.se on Instagram

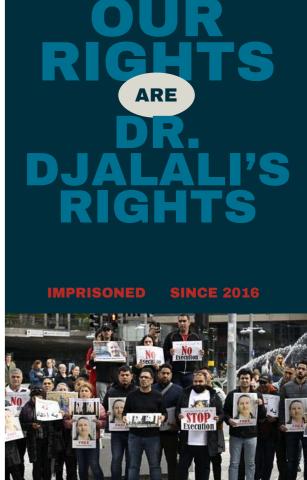
As part of the SAR's Student-led workshop, our team launched an Instagram account to raise awareness and garner support for Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali's release. Our objective is to shed light on his unjust imprisonment, mobilize public support, and apply pressure on authorities through constant social media advocacy.

To achieve this, we created and shared informational posts detailing Dr. Djalali's situation, his wrongful



@liu.sar.se Instagram post





In this regard, we consistently shared insights from SAR's Free to Think 2024 report, highlighting crucial findings and recommendations to further contextualize Dr. Djalali's case within the broader threats to academic freedom and deepen public understanding of how scholars worldwide face persecution and suppression.

We also used our platform to promote events held as part of LiU's Student-led advocacy seminars. These included a screening of the film *Behrouz*, an awareness-raising exhibition on campus, and a series of events marking the launch of this report—all of which brought together both the activist and academic communities.

However, building an online presence came with challenges. Instagram's increasingly biased algorithm, which often deprioritizes human rights and political advocacy content in favor of commercially driven posts, makes it difficult for political content to reach a wider audience. Despite this, we managed to bring a small but dedicated community together.

Looking ahead, we aim to continue producing engaging and informative content to sustain momentum for LiU's next student advocacy seminar group. In the future, expanding collaborations with other local organizations and student groups can further amplify our reach; while exploring new formats such as video testimonials, interviews, and behind-the-scenes advocacy updates can add depth to our campaign. Additionally, producing more content in Swedish can help us strengthen our local advocacy impact. Our Instagram campaign has been an essential tool in spreading awareness and building solidarity for Dr. Djalali, and we remain committed to using social media as a platform for meaningful advocacy and action.

Film screening

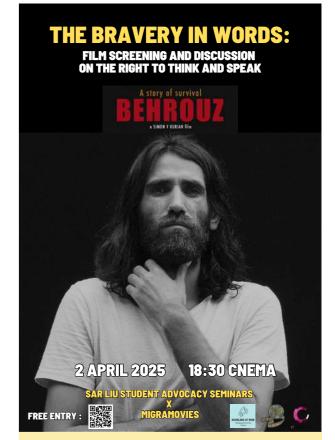


Photo of CNEMA where the film event was held. Photo Credit: Cnema

The Bravery in Words: A Discussion on the Right To Think and Speak

Scholars at Risk Student Advocacy Seminars collaborated with MigraMovies, a student-led initiative from the Ethnic and Migration Masters Programme at University of Linköping that showcases films related to migration, for a special event to raise awareness of Dr. Djalali. The collaborative event aimed to highlight the necessity for academic freedom and advocate to the Swedish public for his release. The film that was chosen was Behrouz, directed by Simon V. Kurian, and it is a documentary about Behrouz Boochani, a Kurdish journalist that fled Iran, who tried to seek asylum in Australia in 2013. He was detained and sent to Manus Island Detention prison for six years, and he reported and wrote about the horrific reality of life for detainees through a smuggled phone. His book 'No Friend But the Mountains,' is one of the most celebrated books in Australia, winning the prestigious literary award, the 2019 Victorian Prize for Literature.

We believe this film highlights the need for academic freedom as Boochani had to flee Iran due to him being a journalist and had the courage to smuggle his writings about the true reality of detainees out of the detention prison. It is easy to correlate Dr. Djalali's brave decision to accept Tehran University's invitation for give lectures about disaster medicine even though there were



Poster for The bravery in words event held by LiU SAR student-lead workshop group. Credit: Femke Margot Geertsema from MigraMovies

risks. Iran continues to force individuals to flee or imprison them for their freedom to think, questions, and share ideas, yet countries like Australia and Sweden do not do enough to protect these individuals. Having Boochani imprisoned in Manus Island for 6 years or not fighting hard enough for Dr. Djalali's 9-year imprisonment in Iran is not how you protect individuals who have had their freedoms ignored.

What Did Our Event Look Like?

The Bravery in Words: A Discussion on the Right To Think and Speak aimed to highlight the need to have academic freedom and the freedom to think, questions. and share ideas. The event was held in Cnema Norrköping, and we were able to do a mini-exhibition in the lobby about Dr. Djalali. At 18:00, all the members of SAR Student Advocacy Seminar along with Claudia Tazreiter, the SAR Sweden Representative, spoke about academic freedom and Dr. Djalali. After the film screening, we had Behrouz Boochani and the director/editor/cinematographer, Simon V. Kurian for a 'Comments and Discussion' with the audience. We want to thank all the audience members that participated in the thoughtful and meaningful discussion! LiU SAR Student Advocacy Seminar and MigraMovies would like to thank Claudia Tazreiter for putting us into contact with Boochani and Kurian, and we would especially like to thank Behrouz Boochani and Simon V. Kurian for providing the film and participating in the 'Comments and Discussion' session.



Photo taken from a previous MigraMovies event

14. 15.

Exhibition

Beyond the Screen: Cinema and the Struggle for Free **Expression**

The exhibition serves as a platform to present our student-led advocacy efforts in support of Dr. Djalali, focusing on academic freedom and human rights. Through two exhibitions in Norrköping—the Cnema Exhibition and the Lobby Exhibition—we hope to raise awareness and mobilise public support for his case.

The Cnema Exhibition, held on April 2nd as part of the "LiU SAR Student Advocacy Seminars and MigraMovies" event, will center around freedom of speech through the lens of cinema. We have carefully selected fifteen film posters from different countries and time periods, all of which explore the struggles of individuals across various professions in their fight for free expression. For instance, Lenny (1974), a biographical drama about comedian Lenny Bruce, whose sharp critiques on politics, religion, and morality led to multiple arrests on obscenity charges; V for Vendetta (2005), which portrays a dystopian government that silences opposition, controls the media, and imprisons those who dare to speak out, including journalists, scientists, and activists. Alongside the posters, we have prepared short introductions and key quotes from each film, aiming to draw attention to the real-world parallels of repression and censorship.

To strengthen the impact of the exhibition, we have also created informative posters providing a more detailed introduction to Dr. Djalali's case, including photos of his family, which we hope will help visitors gain a deeper understanding of his situation. By connecting these themes of freedom of speech, state suppression, and resistance, the exhibition not only highlights injustices in history and fiction but also underscores the ongoing struggle for academic freedom today.

The Lobby Exhibition, as a key part of our advocacy efforts, will run from April 7th through May. In addition to the film posters featured in the first exhibition, it will prominently present our full report, which documents the collective efforts of Sweden-based students in advocating for Dr. Djalali's release. The exhibition will also include selected screenshots from our social media campaigns and photos from past advocacy events, providing a broader perspective on the movement's reach and impact. Besides this, we will be setting up a message wall, which will invite visitors to share their thoughts and reflections. By creating this space for engagement, we hope to foster deeper conversations, and inspire more people to take action, and encourage visitors to stand in solidarity for academic freedom and human rights.



Poster made by Blessing Edebor



Exhibition poster made by Blessing Edebor

Seminar Presentation and Webinar



Linköping University campus Norrköping, credit: Jenny Widén

With the final report in hand, our advocacy seminars held a seminar and webinar in Sweden. During both of our presentations, we spoke about what we did as a seminar group and presented our Final Report to the audience members. We discussed the necessity of academic freedom and most importantly Dr. Djalali's case. The audience members at Norrköping consisted of fellow classmates and students, REMESO staff, and anyone interested in SAR. We also invited the vice-Chancellor, Dean of the International Office, Professors, and other university leaders. We aimed to have thoughtful and meaningful discussions about what it means to have academic freedom in Sweden and expressed the urgency for Iran to release Dr. Djalali.

As we are the first seminar in all of Sweden, we also to hosted a webinar for SAR Sweden and for anyone interested in learning about a SAR seminar at their university. We invited SAR Sweden and the representatives from various universities in Sweden to hear about our journey, the final report, and Dr. Djalali. Lastly, on April 29th and 30th, three representatives, Andrea Kjellin, Leigh Lane and Xuewen Gao from our seminar presented our Final Report at European Student Advocacy Days 2025 in Dundee, Scotland. This event brought students and faculty from SAR's Student Advocacy Seminars together to train on the best practices in advocacy and emphasis the necessity of academic freedom.

16. 17.

Recommendations for Future SAR Student-led workshops in Sweden



Some members of the LiU SAR student-led workshop. From left to right: Elif Nur Öner, Gus Sorata Watanabe, Ikechukwu Franklin Mbachu, Leigh Anne Lane, Blessing Edebor and Andrea Kjellin. Photo Credit: Thor Balkhed from LiU Magazine

As the first cohort in the Sweden to conduct a SAR student-led workshop, we would like to share some of our experiences and recommendations to future students and teachers who are thinking of organizing seminars across the Swedish university sector.

- Organising a SAR student-led workshop in Sweden has its unique challenges. The academic schedule of specific programs can be a challenges for such workshops. We think it is advisable to allocate extracurricular time either before or after the official start-time/finishing time of a course in order for student advocacy to work effectively.
- For teachers organizing the course, we would recommend an information session be held for interested students. Information on scheduling, activities, responsibilities, and examples from other workshops would help students better understand what SAR student advocacy work is.
- We found that there was much to contribute to existing advocacy by talking about the Swedish context. Other universities in countries like the United States and Australia had previously done advocacy seminars for Dr. Djalali, yet ours is the first to specifically pick up his case in the Swedish context. Knowing how multicultural Sweden is, there re bound to be connections to be found here in Sweden with other scholars at risk as well.
- One of our planned advocacy activities was to reach out to Swedish politicians to talk about Dr. Djalali's case and to possibly meet them in person. We faced difficulty in scheduling interviews and meetings with the Swedish MPs we contacted. For future advocacy groups, we strongly suggest that you contact politicians as early and as often as possible to arrange dates to talk and meet.
- For program's with predominantly international students, we would really recommend to have either a student or a faculty member who is Swedish to be part of your advocacy group. Our group has been highly indebted to the two Swedish students who have contributed not only with their own work, but also with translation and reaching out to Swedish politicians among others. Having a Swedish speaker would make reaching out to local media much easier, and would find a much wider audience to

Contact

Linköping University student lead seminar group. Email: SAR@student.liu.se Course Co-ordinator, Claudia Tazreiter Email: claudia.tazreiter@liu.se

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Dr. Djalali, an Iranian-Swedish citizen, has been wrongly convicted and imprisoned since 2016. Join the #FreeDjalali advocacy campaign today!

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