

Open letter to the UAE: Release Matthew Hedges

22 October, 2018

We, the undersigned, call for the immediate release of Matthew Hedges, a PhD student in the School of Government and International Affairs (SGIA), Durham University. Matt was arrested on 5 May 2018 at Dubai International Airport as he was leaving the UAE. Matt was in the UAE to conduct a series of interviews for his PhD thesis which examines the role of civil-military relations in the UAE post-Arab spring. He had permission to be there and to meet and interview officials with knowledge of civil-military relations in the Emirates.

For almost six months, Matthew has been held in solitary confinement at an undisclosed location in Abu Dhabi. He has had extremely limited access to British consular authorities and access to legal representation was only granted a week ago. Information about his case and the reasons for his detention were withheld from his family, Durham University and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. It is only in the last week that the UAE authorities have charged Matthew with gathering information to share with a foreign agency – the British intelligence. This charge is totally without foundation.

Matthew's physical and mental health have deteriorated. He was forced to sleep on the floor for the first four and a half months after his arrest, denied access to regular showers and prevented from receiving any reading material that might help allay his mental anguish. Since his detention, it has come to light that Matthew suffers from anxiety and depression; amongst other worrying symptoms, he has expressed suicidal thoughts in the brief communications he has had with his wife. The conditions in which he has been kept are degrading and inhumane and violate all internationally accepted practices over the detention of individuals.

We call upon the Emirati authorities to release Matthew Hedges without delay. Not only is he an innocent man being held unjustly, but it also places into question existing and future academic ties between the UK and the UAE. British scholars can no longer regard the Emirates as a safe place for legitimate academic research, despite the efforts of the UAE government to encourage educational exchanges between UK institutions and the UAE. By his unjustified detention, prolonged arrest in solitary confinement, lack of access to proper legal advice and limited consular access, Matthew's rights have been and continue to be denied by the UAE authorities.

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533. Professor Devin Thornburg, Adelphi University
534. Professor Katie Laatikainen, Adelphi University
535. Professor Emerita Marie L Campbell, University of Victoria (Canada)
536. Professor Chris Tilly, UCLA
537. Professor Elizabeth Palley, Adelphi University
538. Dr. Margaret Lally, Adelphi University
539. Dr. Gordon Poole, Università degli Studi l'Orientale Napoli
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544. Ms. Jenny Daly, Edinburgh University Press
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546. Dr. Anthony Bash, Durham University

547. Dr. Dara Conduit, University of Melbourne
548. Professor Alec Ryrie, Durham University
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591. Professor Helga Kromp-Kolb, Universität für Bodenkultur Wien

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628. Ms. Cinzia Bianco, Independent researcher
629. Professor Paul Murray, Durham University
630. Professor Emerita Marine Poirier, CEDEJ
631. Emeritus Professor Michel Tuchsherer, Aix-Marseille Université/Former Director CEFAS
632. Société des Études sur le Moyen-Orient et les Mondes Musulmans (SEMOMM)
633. Dr. Rhys Machold, University of Glasgow
634. Dr. Robert Orttung, George Washington University
635. Professor Nedim Gürsel, CNRS
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