



Volume Number 3  
Issue Number 3

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

# THE RISING TIMES

Special Edition: Student Activism



## OUR STAFF

Co-Editor: Joammi Abbasi

Co-Editor: Mariam Siam

Art Editor : Aysha Mohdi

Creative Contributor: Aya Darwish

Staff Writer: Hassan Elsaid

Advisor: Sr. Ahlam Yassin

A'A Everyone!

Due to unforeseen circumstances, RSA students find themselves at the forefront of fighting for their teacher's freedom. This special edition addresses the #SaveBasit movement, along with other trending student activist movements, past and present.

-RSA Newspaper Staff

**"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."**

-Margaret Mead

The Rising Times is a student centered newspaper which aims to provide students with intellectually engaging news, op-eds, and student pieces of art and literature. The Rising Times aims to be the student voice in our community, offering thought provoking content and fierce discussion starters.



Illustrated By: Aysha M. , 11th Grade

## Justice in Islam: The Perspective of the Sunnah

عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ: مَنْ رَأَى مِنْكُمْ مُنْكَرًا فَلْيُغَيِّرْهُ بِيَدِهِ، فَإِنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَبِلِسَانِهِ، فَإِنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَبِقَلْبِهِ، وَذَلِكَ أَضْعَفُ الْإِيمَانِ - رَوَاهُ مُسْلِمٌ.

On the authority of Abu Saeed al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah say, "Whoever of you sees an evil must then change it with his hand. If he is not able to do so, then [he must change it] with his tongue. And if he is not able to do so, then [he must change it] with his heart. And that is the slightest [effect of] faith." [Muslim]

Life isn't perfect, throughout our lives we will see injustice and evil actions being done by the people around us. As Muslims, we are advised to face this evil, or injustice and change it ourselves, whether it's with action or words. If you are restricted on doing either of the two, then it is your duty to at least acknowledge the injustice internally and understand injustice is happening in front of you, and at least send prayers for those being afflicted by the injustice. The hadith concludes with "And that is the slightest [effect of] faith." which is interpreted differently by Islamic scholars.

(Continued on page 2)

## Welcome to this Special Edition

Welcome to this special edition of The Rising Times: Student Activism. The newspaper committee has chosen to create this special edition due to recent occurrences with one of our RSA teachers, and the current political climate in the United States. Not too long ago our beloved teacher Ahmed Abdel-Basit was detained by ICE because his request for political asylum was rejected. If deported he could very well face severe punishment by the Egyptian government for his political activism.

Ahmed is an academic who was persecuted and sentenced to death in his country for his work on academic freedom, and his fight for democracy. As Americans, we have been living in the comfort of being able to express our thoughts and opinions without fear of being reprimanded. Ahmed came to this country for refuge; he came to this country to be able to live in that comfort, yet he was met with quite the opposite. As he's mentioned, he could have traveled anywhere in the world, including Europe, but he chose to seek refuge in the United States. I pose this question to the citizens of this country, as a motivation to fight for justice: how could a country that firmly stands for democracy arrest and deport a man that fights for it?

As his students, and more importantly as Muslim-Americans, it is our duty to do whatever we can possible to help support him and fight for justice. These past few months we have seen an immense amount of light shed on student activism. We have seen the strength, progress and ability to create change when students stand united and fight for a just cause.

What this edition of the newspaper is working to achieve is not only raise awareness and gain support for Br. Ahmed's cause; **it is to show that students should not be underestimated. Students have the ability and the means, now more than ever, to make themselves heard through many different platforms, and this newspaper edition is meant to be one of those platforms where our voices are heard.**

## Weekly Silent Protest

As many have already heard Ahmed Mohamed Abdul-Basit had been detained recently by ICE agents and being threatened with deportation. Professor Ahmed is being held in Elizabeth Detention Center and is currently awaiting his trial on May 10th. On Saturday, April 21st, more than 50 students, teachers, friends and community members rallied together in support of Ahmed's release. The silent protest was held in front of the Detention Center with people in support of him holding signs that read: "Bring our Teacher Back to our School", and pictures of the teacher standing in front of a board filled with notes that he taught his students.

The protest was filled with people driven and united by a cause that is dear to their hearts. As students who had this man directly affect their lives, not only in the classroom but beyond, this issue directly affects them.

(Continued on page 2)



Some say that the hadith expressed can be in comparison to ranks, with changing evil with action to be at the highest rank, while changing it with one’s heart to be at the lowest rank. Others suggest that for a believer to recognize evil, and want to change it for the better, whether or not he may have the ability to do so, is the very manifestation of faith.

In Br. Ahmed’s case we must use our words and speak out against the injustice being done to our teacher. He’s helped teach us and share his knowledge about the world of physics since the beginning of the year. Now, it’s time to repay the favor while he needs us, we have the ability and responsibility to raise awareness and should take advantage of this opportunity.

RSA students have taken it upon themselves to start a petition that, as of this writing, has over 6,800 signings. Anyone reading this article can be the next person to sign, and I encourage you to do so. This is a man’s life on the line, and it is on the brink of being taken away from him unjustly. It’s our duty, our responsibility, to do whatever we possibly can to get the word out to people all around the world to increase the chances of saving this man’s life and seeing him happy and healthy. It is your duty as a believer just as the Prophet (SAW) said, to recognize the injustice and do something.

Your voice is more powerful than you think; now’s the time to raise it, and help our teacher come back to us safely.

Basheer M. , 11th Grade

The Arab Spring



The “Arab Spring” (Arabic: الربيع العربيar-Rabī’ al-‘Arabi), is defined as a series of anti-government protests, uprisings and armed rebellions that spread across the Middle East in early 2011. But their purpose, relative success, and outcome remain hotly disputed in Arab countries, among foreign observers, and between world powers looking to cash in on the changing map of the Middle East (via [ThoughtCo.com](#)). The Arab Spring has led to civil wars in many countries including, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain. Street demonstrations took place in Northern Africa and the Middle East. Minor protests took place in Saudi Arabia, and a few other Middle Eastern and North African countries.

The infamous situation that occurred in 2010 that sparked the Arab Spring was when a young man by the name of Mohamed Bouazizi was selling fruit on a sidewalk in order to support his siblings and widowed mother (via [ThoughtCo.com](#)). One day, police came and noticed that he was selling without a permit, so they wanted to take his cart away. He resisted, so a police woman slapped him, humiliated by this, he went to a government building and set himself on fire outside of the building (via [ThoughtCo.com](#)). His death sparked influence in many others and protests were on the rise.

Phones were used to record these protests and shared onto the internet. These protests around the world called for the Tunisian President and his regime to step down. After a month, he fled into exile (via [NPR.org](#)). This then sparked protests and revolutions throughout the Arab world. A slogan of the demonstrators in the Arab world is ash sha’b yurīd isqāt an nizām ("the people want to bring down the regime").... Brother Ahmed, our school’s physics teacher, is facing deportation from the US even though he still has a visa.

(Continued on Page 3)

Highlights From the #SaveBasit Campaign



“A human rights activist who fled his country to come to America where he assimilated into our culture and advocated for all our human rights.”  
“You then learn that there is a possibility that you will be deported back to your country where you hold a death sentence.”  
“He came seeking the American dream but found the American nightmare.”  
“The US has labeled Ahmed as a threat to the community but on the contrary he was nothing but a great benefit as a educator and mentor.”  
“He spoke about his Egyptian death sentence without any problems. But asking him about his American students? He couldn’t make out a sentence without choking up.”  
“If they send me back to Egypt, I will be hung right away.”  
“I hope to see my children, help them and play with them, but after they arrested me my bad thinking is that I will never see them again.”  
“Everything is damaged. Everything.”  
“An orange jumpsuit does not define who you are.”  
“America needs him.”  
Shaza A. , Rayan A., 12th Grade  
#SAVEBASIT

Student Activism: Spreading Awareness for Your Cause

Never underestimate your power and abilities as a student, or as someone who is not necessarily in the spotlight. These past months have shed light on a new era of student activism in the United States, triggered by the Parkland Florida school shooting. I mentioned new era because student activism has been present in the United States since the civil rights movement and even before that, but it has never gotten attention and coverage like it has recently.

Maybe the fact of the matter is that this activism is now gaining coverage because it is being led by white students and not students of color. Maybe because the students are coming from privileged backgrounds and schools. Regardless of what the factor may be, that particular issue is not our focus.

Our focus is that students are capable, and now more than ever. Students now have the means more than ever to reach out and make themselves and their causes known through many platforms including the largest one: social media. Social media has given students the opportunity and the means to reach out to endless limits. It has allowed students to connect with people who at one point seemed out of reach.

To all student activists who want change, no one is out of reach. Lawmakers, and people of authority who have the jurisdiction to make decisions and possibly change, may sometimes come off as intimidating. This should not intimidate you from making yourself and your cause known to them. Actually, on the contrary, with all the student activism we have seen, the lawmakers are the ones who seem to be intimidated.

At certain times, in order to bring light to your cause, you are going to have to exit your comfort zone and put yourself in positions you’ve never been in before. You must also convince yourself that these lawmakers and “intimidating” people, who have the authority to make major decisions, are human just like you are. At the end of the day they are ordinary people, like you and I.

(Continued on Page 3)

As a student myself, I can say Professor Ahmed’s lessons went well beyond the classroom and directly affected each student in a beneficial manner. Colleagues were there in solidarity and also the way he treated them on daily basis with a kind hearted attitude. The protest embodied the discontent of his reality, but also the hope we have living in a country that has a democratic spirit.

As a student, seeing my classmates and other fellow students united for a common political cause to free our teacher really brought another reality of concepts. The fact that one of our first reactions to the issue was uniting for a common cause that affected us all, shows the unity that this issue brought about us. Teachers, students and friends all rallying in support of an innocent



man and providing justice for a man, like all of us, was struggling to attain the highly regarded American Dream.  
Hassan E. , 12th Grade

Student Activism: Our Perspective

“The duty of youth is to challenge corruption.”

Historically, we hear the saying “we fight so they won’t have to” quite often. As we see it, the generations before us fought to the death so that we may have the opportunities we have today and to not take advantage of them would be putting shame to their sacrifices. Since were kids, we’ve been volunteering, assisting community outreach, and playing an active role within our community so that once we established maturity we could own our position within our people and be their voice.

You choose if you want your voice to be heard, no one can make that decision for you. Those who came before us fought for the cause, regardless of age, color, religion. They fought despite knowing what consequences they would face. Why are we any different? Why is advocating for human life so hard? Hasn’t the cause hit close enough to home to ignite the fire within your heart to fight for those who cannot?

So far within our community we’ve had two members arrested in correlation with their supposed questionable status in our country. Isn’t that enough for us to wake up? No, I’m not talking about the middle aged uncles and aunts, nor your parents, although their support is welcome and very much appreciated, but the point of activism is not to stand up for one cause, it’s to stand up for them all. You start from a young age so that your life is not spent in naivety while those around you and around the globe spend it suffering.



(Continued on Page 4)



- Spread Awareness for Your Cause:
- Use all the social media platforms you possibly can.
  - Create a petition and have as many people sign it as possible.
  - Reach out to your lawmakers and authorities, you can find their numbers online.
  - Reach out to journalists and news stations professionally.

A major advantage our generation has: the internet. You don't have to meet any criteria for you to get these elected officials' attention, all you need is support and awareness.

Remember, if you believe in your cause and are passionate about what you do, nothing is impossible.

Mariam S., 11th Grade

Phones were used to record these protests and shared onto the internet. These protests around the world called for the Tunisian President and his regime to step down. After a month, he fled into exile (via NPR.org). This then sparked protests and revolutions throughout the Arab world. A slogan of the demonstrators in the Arab world is ash sha'b yurid isqāt an nizām ("the people want to bring down the regime").... Brother Ahmed, our school's physics teacher, is facing deportation from the US even though he still has a visa.

He was an assistant professor in Cairo University until he was fired for his organization of peaceful protests against the removal of first freely elected president, Mohamed Morsi. After leaving Cairo University, he then went on to teaching at Qatar University. He was then sentenced to death by the military in May 2016. After this sentence, he decided to seek refuge in the US. After all, America is the land of people of completely different people and we do have an amendment that allows us to say whatever we want. He arrived in New Jersey in June 2016 on a visitors visa, but then was granted permission legally to work in the US two months later. He would repeatedly check in with immigration officials, and is welcomed into the Arab and Muslim community. Teaching students at RSA physics and SAT prep. He motivates us to do what's best for us and to make our voices heard.

Though the Arab Spring had a few good outcomes, there was more bad than good. For example, people thought that the removal of corrupt government individuals would lead to improvements, rather it could be worse or unlikely better and improved just as they thought, depending on some factors. There was also chronic instability in some countries because of political transitions which lead to economic struggles. Tunisia, for example, adopted a modernist constitution and held parliamentary elections in 2014, so they didn't really go through much economic struggles or anything of the such. But we can not say the same for countries like Egypt because of failing to proceed with improvements for their country. Take the whole Morsi and Sisi situation as an example, that brought chaos amongst an entire country, while Tunisia adopted laws and had parliamentary elections. These are only just a few reasons why the Arab Spring was a failure even though there was a bit of success, there was a whole lot more of failure.

Hamzah M. , 11th Grade

### Images from the Silent Protest



#SaveBasit #ElizabethDetentionCenter  
#CommunitySupport #StudentActivism #Asylum

### Coming to America

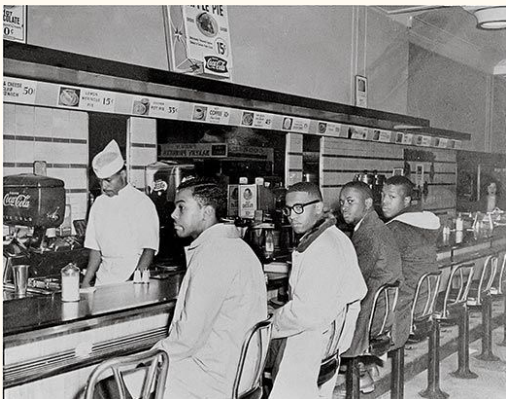
I fled  
I fled from my homeland  
I fled from the chains that tried to contain  
I fled from the country that mothered me  
I left  
I left my home  
I left my loved ones  
I left everything I knew behind  
To come to America  
  
I came to start fresh  
To live the dream  
I came with high expectations  
Only to be knocked to the ground  
  
I tried  
I tried to show  
But at the same time staying true to myself and beliefs  
I tried to find a balance  
  
I came to America just to be discouraged  
  
But don't worry they haven't seen the last of me  
I will prove them wrong

Fatima M., 12th

### 8 Times in History When Students Turned to Activism

Throughout history, we have seen high school students leading nationwide reforms. Despite being too young to vote, they have helped lead many landmark social and political movements as they were driven by their passion, ambition, and sense of defiance.

**Greensboro Sit-ins, 1960-** Student led national sit-ins that first began in February 1960 with 4 teenagers in Greensboro, NC which led to the creation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in April 1960 which sparked the Civil Rights Movement.



**University Uprisings, 1968-** In the spring of 1968, student protests erupted across the whole world. Some accomplished their goals while others didn't, however they all contributed to creating a climate of possible change, inspiring others to follow their footsteps.

**Apartheid divestment, 1970s-80s-** An uprising sparked by public school students in Soweto, South Africa that began as a peaceful march but then turned deadly when police began firing. The images of police brutality sparked a GLOBAL movement against apartheid.

**Tiananmen Square, 1989-** On June 4th, 1989, several weeks of student-led pro-democracy demonstrations in Beijing, China ended in manslaughter as thousands of troops opened fire, killing hundreds, possibly thousands (numbers never released).

**Velvet Revolution, 1989-** Eight days after the Berlin Wall fell, the students of neighboring Czechoslovakia stepped in to topple their own Communist Party. After 11 days of protest, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia relinquished power, paving the way for the playwright Vaclav Havel to become president in December.

**Iran, 1999-** After officers raided a dormitory at the University of Tehran, wounding at least 20 people and jailing 125, more than 10,000 Iranian students took to the streets. In the short term, the protests forced officials, including President Mohammad Khatami, to condemn the police raid. Since Iran's 1979 revolution, student activists had generally been tied to political parties.

**Black Lives Matter, 2013-Present-** After the police killing of Michael Brown, the Ferguson, Mo. protests were led by students. They were protesting police gun violence used against unarmed black suspects. However, unlike students of Parkland, they haven't been praised and are frequently labelled as trouble-makers and thugs.

**Save Basit, 2018 -** After Br. Ahmed Abdul Basit was unjustly detained by ICE without receiving notice that his asylum seeking status was denied, our very own students have sprung to action, launching a petition and fundraiser, creating social media accounts for the campaign, giving an interview to the Huff-Post, contacting various professors to write letters in support of this campaign, and organizing a collective "call your representative" campaign on behalf of Br. Ahmed. MashaAllah, they have succeeded in garnering immense support for this just cause and inshaAllah they will succeed in the mission as students before them have.

Joammi A., 11th Grade

(Inspired by a NYTimes article)



The Caged and the Free

Wings in the air,  
Breeze blowing through the feathers.  
Singing for all to hear,  
Singing to those close and far.  
Singing to those who are in need of songs  
of hope,  
The songs of the brave and the free.  
Touching the hearts of the broken,  
And catching the breath of the unspoken.  
Give hope to the hopeless,  
Give strength to the weak.  
Singing to those close and far with its wings  
caught in the breeze.

Little bird stuck in her cage.  
Singing but no one can hear,  
Singing sorrows and pain.  
Shut from the fields of air,  
And the breeze of the winds.  
Away from her family and the world,  
Held captive in a little cage.  
Let her spread her wings, and let her fly,  
Let her be free and show the world how to  
fight.  
Let her soar through the sky and sing the  
song of the free  
Little bird stuck in your cage, sing the songs  
of hope and wait for the pain to go away.  
Because soon justice will be served and you



will be set  
free,  
Set free and  
spread hope  
to the hope-  
less once  
again.

Aya D. , 11th Grade

Student Activism: Our Perspective

Children are the hope for the future because they have not lost their innocence, humanity, or hope. Children are the hope for humanity because those who constantly choose to create unrest cannot go unchallenged by those who choose to be fearful; their humanity cannot go unchecked. That is our purpose of living on this green earth. We fight so that others can live. Never underestimate your potential. Age is a mere number, not a measure of any virtues nor wisdom, age is a trick that many of you fall for, unaware of what our young age is hiding.

Rayan A., Shaza A., 12th Grade



#SaveBasit

Crossword

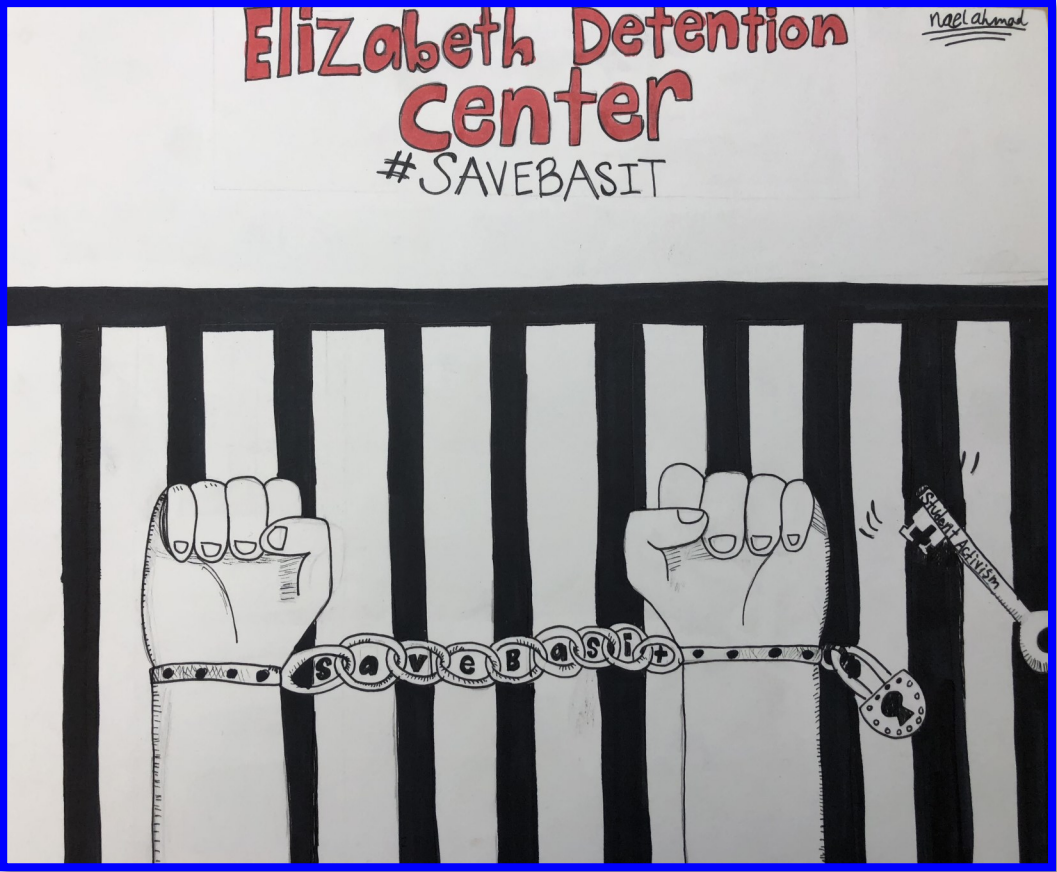
Down:

1. limiting an individual's freedom
2. word before house or plant
4. the protection granted by a nation
5. One who is enrolled or attends classes at a school, college, or university.
7. resist strongly
9. talk given to an audience

Across:

3. persuade or induce
4. The use of direct, often confrontational action, such as a demonstration or strike, in opposition to or support of a cause.
6. the condition of being free; the power to act or speak or think without externally imposed restraints
8. legal, social, or ethical principals of freedom or enlightenment

#SaveBasit Political Cartoon



Illustrated By: Nael A., 12th Grade

Ways to Support the #SaveBasit Campaign

1. Sign the Petition: <https://www.change.org/p/department-of-homeland-security-save-ahmed-abdel-basit>
2. Support the LaunchGood Campaign: [https://www.launchgood.com/project/save\\_basit#!/](https://www.launchgood.com/project/save_basit#!/)
3. Follow on Social Media: FB SaveBasit, Twitter SaveBasit
4. Call your Elected Officials and bring the campaign to their attention!
5. More information on [www.savebasit.com](http://www.savebasit.com)

