

Citation for Rula al-Saffar

Her colleagues say of Dr Rula al-Saffar that she loves people, works hard and always tries to lift the spirits of the people around her, thus representing the characteristics of all that is good. Rula is Assistant Professor at the College of Nursing in Bahrain, and she is also the President of the Bahrain Nursing Society.

In 1996 she drafted the first code of practice and principles of nursing ethics for Bahrain. In 2006 she launched a campaign to increase the salaries of nurses and change the status of nurses from a general salary scale to a professional scale. In the same year she travelled to Lebanon during the war there, and in 2009 to Gaza, to stand in solidarity with the injured people during both wars.

In both 2012 and 2013, she was nominated as 11th out of 500 of the most influential Arab personalities by ArabianBusiness.com. This year (2014), she was listed as one of the 100 most influential Arab personalities and one of the 10 Heroes in the Arab World. During the crisis in Bahrain in early 2012, she came to worldwide attention together with 48 physicians, for treating protesters. For this, she was detained for five months, tortured, electrocuted and finally acquitted in June 2012.

Rula manages the campaign 'I Am Free', an international and national campaign to release all medics and prisoners of conscience in jails in Bahrain and to free all detained medics in the world and protect them in the future. In March this year, she visited human rights societies, such as Physicians for Human Rights, in the United States, and the Human Rights Council in Geneva about her cause. She is aiming for a resolution for Medical Neutrality at the United Nations and to have 16 March as International Medical Neutrality Day. One of her colleagues in Bahrain says 'she will get it! I know her!'

Dr Rula al-Saffar has also developed the Emergency Nursing Program as a sub speciality at the College of Health Sciences in her country. She works for the rights of women and children in general in Bahrain, advocating the highest standards of care and dignity for people needing nursing care. In the community, she goes out of her way to help people in need. No wonder that she manages to resolve conflicts and handle difficult situations with remarkable patience and admirable tact. In fact, says one of her colleagues, 'I have never met anyone like her with such whole-hearted kindness'.