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February 8, 2018

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei
Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran
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c/o H.E. Mr. Gholamali Khoshroo
Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
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Your Excellency,

We write on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) to express our alarm regarding reports that appeared on 4 February 2018 that the Iranian Supreme Court has denied a recent request to review the case of Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, whose death sentence was upheld on 9 December 2017. We have written to you before regarding Dr. Djalali's case (see our letters of [6 February 2017](#), [25 October 2017](#), and [21 December 2017](#)) expressing our deep concern regarding the purported reasons for his arrest, the subsequent handling of his case, the conditions of his imprisonment and the sentence he received. We repeat today in the strongest possible terms our urgent call that you intervene with the relevant authorities, urge them to reverse his capital sentence immediately, release him from prison, and drop all charges against him.

MESA was founded in 1966 to promote scholarship and teaching on the Middle East and North Africa. The preeminent organization in the field, MESA publishes the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and has nearly 3,000 members worldwide. MESA is committed to ensuring academic freedom of expression, both within the region and in connection with the study of the region in North America and elsewhere.

Dr. Djalali, an Iranian-born scholar and professor of disaster medicine and permanent resident of Sweden, was arrested by security forces of Iran's Ministry of Intelligence in April 2016 while visiting Iran to participate in a series of academic activities. He had travelled to Iran previously on numerous occasions, without ever encountering complications with state security or immigration officers.

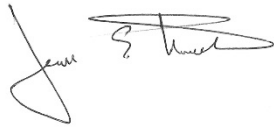
The court verdict of 21 October 2017 claims that Dr. Djalali collaborated with the Israeli government. Yet in the confession tape that was aired on Iran's state-run Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) service on 17 December 2017, neither Israel nor its intelligence service, Mossad, is mentioned. Indeed, no compelling evidence has been offered to corroborate the accusation of collaboration with an enemy state. Instead, Dr. Djalali believes he was arrested for refusing to work for the Iranian intelligence service.

During his long imprisonment, Dr. Djalali has been subjected to psychological torture, including threats to kill his children. He has undertaken several hunger strikes in protest of the unsubstantiated allegations against him. We understand that his health has suffered and he has been denied medical attention. We believe that Dr. Djalali's case mirrors those of Hamid Babaei and Omid Kokabee, two other academics who believe they were arrested and charged with crimes against national security following their refusal to spy on their Western colleagues or to lend their knowledge to military research in Iran.

Dr. Djalali's unlawful arrest and his subsequent conviction and sentencing represent a most egregious infringement on academic freedom and the pursuit of knowledge. In November 2017, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found that depriving Dr. Djalali of his liberty was arbitrary, and contravened relevant provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The Committee on Academic Freedom vociferously objects to these violations of internationally recognized rights and due process in Iran. We urge you to reverse Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali's capital sentence, provide him with medical care without further delay, and ensure his safe return to his family in Sweden.

Sincerely,



Judith E. Tucker
MESA President
Professor, Georgetown University



Amy W. Newhall
MESA Executive Director

cc

Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani, Head of the Judiciary
President Hassan Rouhani
Mohammad Javad Zarif, Minister of Foreign Affairs
His Excellency Stefan Löfven, Prime Minister of Sweden
Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Koumbou Boly Barry, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education
David Kaye, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of
the right to freedom of opinion and expression
Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security
Policy
Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe
Philippe Boillat, Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law Council of Europe