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May 9, 2018

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei  
Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran  
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 concern regarding the arrest of Iranian-British academic Professor Abbas Edalat during his recent visit to Iran to attend an academic workshop.

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 2,500 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. Edalat, who since 1989 has been a Professor of Computer Science and Mathematics at the Imperial College London, was detained by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) on 15 April 2018 while attending an academic workshop in Tehran. It has also been reported that Iranian security forces raided his residence in Tehran and confiscated his computer, notebooks, and CDs. On 21 April, Dr. Edalat's family attempted to post bail for his release, but was unsuccessful. On 25 April, Iran's news sources finally confirmed Dr. Edalat's arrest, accusing him of "membership in a British infiltration network" that had contact with leaders of mass anti-government protests in 2009. It appears that, once again, charges of espionage have been brought against dual-national academics based on unjustified and fabricated accusations that ultimately violate academic freedom.

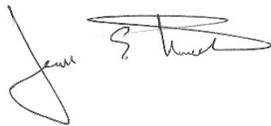
Dr. Abbas Edalat is a computer scientist who has gained prominence owing to his academic research as well as his outspokenness against war and sanctions waged by Western powers against Iran. In April 2017, Dr. Edalat was awarded the Imperial College of London's 2017 Test-of-Time Award for a ground-breaking publication he co-authored in the field of Computer Science. In his efforts to prevent foreign intervention in Iran, Dr. Edalat is also the founder of the US-based Campaign Against Sanctions and Military Intervention in Iran (CASMI). Opposing Western countries' hostilities towards Muslim nations, Dr. Edalat has publicly criticized US President Donald Trump's travel ban, which greatly hinders freedom of movement of academics and researchers from Muslim-majority countries, such as Iran, to the US. That the Iranian authorities are targeting with charges of espionage a distinguished academic such as Dr. Edalat, who has taken courageous positions in opposition to Western intervention and US hostility toward Muslims, is beyond ironic.

The arrest of Dr. Edalat without clear charges of any crime is a violation of Iran's own national laws as well as its obligations under international law. According to Article 32 of the Iranian Constitution, "No one can be arrested except in accordance with the rule and the procedures that are set by the law. In the case of arrest, the charge and the reason for the arrest must be immediately conveyed and communicated to the defendant in writing." The fact that Dr. Edalat has not been formally charged in more than ten days since his arrest is also a violation of Iran's obligation under Article 9.2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which provides: "Anyone who is arrested shall be informed, at the time of arrest, of the reason for his arrest and shall be promptly informed of any charges against him."

The Committee on Academic Freedom strongly objects to the worrying trend in Iran in which dual national academics are increasingly targeted for harassment and arrest, and unjustly and groundlessly accused of espionage or ties to anti-Iran groups or networks. Such continued abuses of academic freedom and freedom of expression are direct violations of internationally and nationally recognized rights by the Iranian authorities. It is our hope that his arrest is the result of a misunderstanding. This distinguished and award-winning academic had traveled to Iran to pursue his academic interests; therefore, we urge you to uphold the relevant provisions of the Iranian constitution and abide by Iran's commitments to international covenants to protect his right to academic freedom as well as due process.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Judith E. Tucker  
MESA President  
Professor, Georgetown University



Amy W. Newhall  
MESA Executive Director

cc

Mansoor Gholami', Minister of Science, Research and Technology  
Mohammad Bathaei, Minister of Education  
Ayatollah Sadeqh Larijani, Head of the Judiciary  
Hassan Rouhani, President  
The Honorable Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights