

**Middle
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22 July 2019

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
622 Third Avenue, 34th Floor
New York, NY 10017, USA
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Major General Hossein Salami, Commander-in-chief of the Islamic Revolutionary
Guard Corps
c/o H.E. Mr. Gholamali Khoshroo
Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
622 Third Avenue, 34th Floor
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Your Excellency and General Salami,

We write on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) to protest the detention of the Iranian-French researcher Dr. Fariba Adelkhah on the basis of what appear to be implausible charges of violations of national security.

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 over 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. Adelkhah, a dual French and Iranian citizen, is Senior Research Fellow at CERIS-Sciences Po in Paris and one of France's leading anthropologists of Iran. At the time of her arrest around 5 June 2019, she had been in Iran for nearly two years, conducting field research on religious authority in the region. She was reportedly arrested by the Revolutionary Guards and brought to Evin prison in Tehran. Her arrest was not confirmed to France's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the French Embassy in Tehran until 25 June 2019, and until today, Dr. Adelkhah has been denied contact with French consular staff.

Reports in local newspapers indicate that she has been accused of spying, although to date no charges have been formally declared. Her colleagues fear her case will be used as a bargaining chip at a time when Paris and Tehran are in crisis talks to save the JCPOA (the multiparty agreement concerning Iran's nuclear program). France has sent an envoy to Tehran twice in the last month to convince Iran to uphold the landmark agreement, which has been at risk of collapsing after President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from it.

Dr. Adelhah, a long-term resident of France, has travelled to Iran frequently for her academic work. Many of her writings are freely available on the Internet - <http://www.sciencespo.fr/cefi/fr/papier/etude> - and they are testimony to the highest standards of academic research. Importantly, they do not deal with matters related to Iran's security policy or its institutions of defense. In fact, besides her current anthropological project, Dr. Adelhah has turned in recent years to translating French late medieval poetry into Persian, an activity which hardly could be considered threatening from a national security point of view.

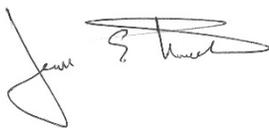
Iran has in recent years arrested at least 30 dual nationals, mostly on espionage charges. To date, no charges have been substantiated against any of these dual nationals; instead, these cases add to the judiciary's violations of Iran's national and international legal commitments. The arrest and detention of individuals without charge is a violation of Iran's 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."

MESA's Committee on Academic Freedom strongly objects to the disturbing trend whereby academic visitors to Iran, from both Iranian and non-Iranian backgrounds, are accused -- without substantiation -- of espionage or crimes against national security. We urge you to ensure that the judiciary and the Revolutionary Courts function in a manner consistent with Iran's national and international legal obligations.

The unlawful arrest and detention of Dr. Adelhah represents a miscarriage of justice. As an international community of scholars, we believe it is imperative that the fundamental rights of our colleagues be respected. We urge you to release Dr. Adelhah immediately and to ensure her safe return to France.

We thank you for your attention to this most serious matter, and we look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,



Judith E. Tucker
MESA President
Professor, Georgetown University



Laurie Brand
Chair, Committee on Academic Freedom
Professor, University of Southern California



Re: Arrest and detention of Dr. Fariba Adelkhah
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cc:

His Excellency Dr. Hassan Rouhani, President
The Honorable Ebrahim Raisi, Head of the Judiciary
The Honorable Mahmoud Alavi, Minister of Intelligence
The Honorable Mohammad Javad Zarif, Minister of Foreign Affairs
The Honorable Gholamali Khoshroo, The Ambassador of Iran to the United Nations
The Honorable Michelle Bachelet, The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
The Honorable Philippe Thiebaud, Ambassador of the Republic of France to the Islamic Republic of Iran
Fonds d'Analyse des Sociétés Politiques, Association de Recherche