

**Middle
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5 August 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
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Sayyed Ebrahim Raisi, Head of the Judiciary
c/o H.E. Mr. Gholamali Khoshroo
Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
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Your Excellencies,

We write on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) to express our grave concern regarding reports that Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, a scholar of disaster medicine, imprisoned in Iran since April 2016 and sentenced to death in October 2017 on charges of espionage, was unexpectedly transferred on 29 July to an undisclosed location where he is being held in solitary confinement. In a short phone call to his family, Dr. Djalali expressed that he is unaware of where he is being held. His family and the larger academic community fear that this transfer is aimed at allowing the Iranian authorities to carry out his capital sentence or to pressure him into making new (false) confessions. We implore Your Excellency, Mr. Raisi, to see to Dr. Djalali's immediate release and his access to urgently needed medical services, and to facilitate his safe return to Sweden.

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. Ahmadreza Djalali, an Iranian-born scholar, a professor of disaster medicine and a permanent resident of Sweden, was arrested by security forces of Iran's Ministry of Intelligence in April 2016 while he was in Iran to participate in a series of academic activities. We have written several letters to you regarding Dr. Djalali (see letters dated [6 February 2017](#), [25 October 2017](#), [21 December 2017](#), [8 February 2018](#), [13 December 2019](#), and [4 April 2019](#)), expressing our concerns about his unlawful arrest, denial of medical attention, death sentence based on forced confessions, and the Supreme Court's upholding of that sentence without allowing any submissions from his defense team.

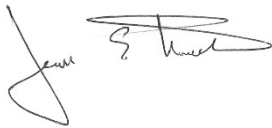
We are writing to you again in protest of this eminent scholar's prolonged detention and capital sentence. We are extremely concerned about Dr. Djalali's recent and unexplained transfer. We fear that its purpose is to further force him to confess to things that he has not done by confronting him with a new set of interrogators who will employ torture and threats of execution. We understand that as a result of the very harsh treatment to which he has been subjected, Dr. Djalali's psychological condition is quite poor.

Such treatment is in conflict with Iran's own laws of due process. Forced confessions are not admissible as evidence in Iranian courts; Dr. Djalali's sentence is therefore invalid and should be dismissed. Furthermore, to date the Iranian authorities have not disclosed any evidentiary basis for the allegations against him, which Dr. Djalali disputes. Since his detention, Dr. Djalali has undertaken several hunger strikes in protest of the unsubstantiated charges against him.

We, along with many academics and scholarly organizations around the world, have expressed our grave concerns regarding the capital sentence that has been handed down and upheld. In addition, we condemn the repeated denial of adequate medical care to Dr. Djalali, even following emergency abdominal surgery in November 2018 and despite the sharp deterioration in his health. In fact, according to his wife, his recent transfer from Evin prison to the undisclosed location occurred instead of what had been a promised visit to a medical specialist.

The Committee on Academic Freedom vociferously objects to these violations of internationally recognized rights and due process in Iran. We echo the calls of other members of the academic community requesting the immediate reversal of Dr. Djalali's capital sentence. Indeed, putting into jeopardy the life of an established academic whose trial represented a miscarriage of justice greatly tarnishes Iran's image and reputation in the world. We call on you to immediately release Dr. Djalali and facilitate his safe return to his wife and children in Sweden.

Sincerely,



Judith E. Tucker
MESA President
Professor, Georgetown University



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

cc:

The Honorable Dr. Hassan Rouhani, President

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

Mr. Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Mr. David Kaye, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and
protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

His Excellency Stefan Löfven, Prime Minister of Sweden

The Honorable Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign
Affairs and Security Policy

Mr. Christophe Poirel, Director of Human Rights Directorate, Human Rights and
Rule of Law, Council of Europe

The Honorable Margot Wallström, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden