



**Middle
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27 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
New York, NY 10017, USA
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Mr 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
622 Third Avenue, 34th Floor
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Mr. Mahmoud Alavi, Minister of Intelligence
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 protest the detention of the Iranian-British researcher Dr. Kameel Ahmady on the basis of what appear to be politically motivated charges.

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. Ahmady, a social anthropologist, is a dual British and Iranian citizen, resident in Iran with his family. He was arrested at his family home and taken to an unknown prison location on 11 August 2019. Since his wife had received no information on his whereabouts and the charges he is facing, she travelled to Evin prison in Tehran on 13 August 2019 where she was told that he had been arrested by intelligence agents on the basis of national security charges and that indeed he was being held in Evin prison. She was also informed that a one-month detention order had been issued that was likely to be extended. Authorities refused to inform her whether the arrest had been undertaken by the Revolutionary Guards or by the Intelligence Ministry - a crucial piece of information as she and the family lawyer are preparing for his trial.

Security agents have also come to the family home and confiscated documents, including his ID card.

Dr. Ahmady is an accomplished anthropologist, who in October 2018 received a first-place award in the literary category from the Global Woman Peace Foundation for his research on gender, children and minority issues.

Dr. Ahmady, who has never before been arrested, summoned or detained, is an independent researcher whose research has always been published in Iran with the permission of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. According to his wife, Dr. Ahmady has not worked for any foreign or Iranian governmental organization. He obtained British citizenship 25 years ago but has rarely travelled to Britain in the past 15 years.

Given the heightened tensions between Iran and Britain in recent weeks, the timing of his arrest begs the question of whether it may be politically motivated, in order to use a British citizen as a bargaining chip in bilateral and international negotiations. In recent years Iran has 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 academics, 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. Ahmady represent another gross 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 see to his immediate release and refrain from future arrests of scholars on what appear to be fabricated national security charges.

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

Sincerely,



Judith E. Tucker
MESA President
Professor, Georgetown University



Re: Detention of Dr. Kameel Ahmady

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laurie A. Brand".

Laurie Brand

Chair, Committee on Academic Freedom

Professor, University of Southern California

cc:

His Excellency 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