



**Middle
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19 May 2020

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran
c/o H.E. Mr. Takht-Ravanchi
Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
Email: iran@un.int
Fax: +1 (212) 867-7086

Chief Justice Ebrahim Raisi, Head of the Judiciary
c/o H.E. Mr. Takht-Ravanchi
Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
Email: iran@un.int
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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 over the harsh and unlawful treatment of Dr. Kylie Moore-Gilbert, who is currently serving a ten-year sentence at Evin prison on charges of alleged espionage. We are particularly concerned about Dr. Moore-Gilbert's well-being since she has been subjected to extremely restrictive conditions for much of her detention, with months spent in solitary confinement. For months, this scholar has been protesting the inhumane conditions of her detention with numerous letters to Iranian prison and judicial authorities, as well as repeated hunger strikes which have seriously affected her health. Your excellencies, we respectfully ask you to please intervene in this very critical case and address Dr. Moore-Gilbert's protests to rectify her intolerable situation.

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.

A dual Australian-British national, Kylie Moore-Gilbert graduated with first-class honors in Asian and Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Cambridge in 2013 and obtained her PhD from the University of Melbourne in 2017. Dr. Moore-Gilbert's doctoral dissertation, entitled 'Shi'i Opposition and Authoritarian Transition in Contemporary Bahrain: The Shifting Political Participation of a Marginalized Majority,' included rare insight from interviews conducted during several fieldwork visits to Bahrain. In 2017, Dr. Moore-Gilbert was appointed an Early Career Academic Fellow and University Lecturer in Islamic Studies at the University of Melbourne, and her research broadened to encompass the study of the relationship between Bahraini Shi'a and Iran after the Arab uprisings of 2011.

A scholar of Shi'i Islam, Dr. Moore-Gilbert had traveled to Iran in September 2018 to attend an academic conference at the invitation of Iranian scholars, but was arrested by the intelligence arm of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corp (IRGC)



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at the airport in Tehran as she was preparing to return to Australia. Although to date the Iranian authorities have not announced any formal charges nor presented any evidence against her, Dr. Moore-Gilbert was tried and convicted in secret in 2019 to ten years in prison, presumably on charges of espionage. An appeal of her sentence failed.

Since her initial arrest, Dr. Moore-Gilbert has been held in the high-security unit of the Revolutionary Guards' own prison within Evin, Ward-2A, which is beyond government oversight and meant to serve only as a temporary detention facility. She has repeatedly requested to be transferred to Evin's regular women's ward, but her pleas have fallen on deaf ears. Her letters to prison and judicial officials revealed that keeping Dr. Moore-Gilbert in such inhumane conditions with very limited contact with her lawyer, family members, or embassy officials, is a means to pressure her to cooperate with the intelligence branch of IRGC by serving as a spy for the organization. In her letters she also complains of extreme psychological pressure at the hand of her interrogators. Such pressure tactics clearly demonstrate the level of unlawful behavior of some Iranian officials while jeopardizing the well-being of an innocent scholar.

The Committee on Academic Freedom is extremely concerned about Dr. Kylie Moore-Gilbert's well-being. We call on the Iranian authorities to abide by their obligations under national and international law to respect due process, treat prisoners humanely, and to provide them with psychological and medical care, as well as access to legal counsel, family contact and consular services. Given her prolonged isolation in harsh conditions, we ask for immediate attention to her case to prevent further deterioration of this scholar's mental and physical health. We respectfully request that you reverse Dr. Kylie Moore-Gilbert's sentence and facilitate her safe return home to Australia.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dina Rizk Khoury', with a long, sweeping underline.

Dina Rizk Khoury
MESA President
Professor, George Washington University

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laurie Brand', with a stylized, cursive style.

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



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cc:

His Excellency Dr. Hassan Rouhani, President
The Honorable Mahmoud Alavi, Minister of Intelligence
The Honorable Mohammad Javad Zarif, Minister of Foreign Affairs
The Honorable Takht-Ravanchi, Permanent Representative of Iran to the
United Nations
The Honorable Michelle Bachelet, The United Nations High Commissioner for
Human Rights
His Excellency Scott Morrison, Prime Minister of Australia
The Honorable Marise Payne, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Australia
The Honorable Lyndall Sachs, Australian Ambassador to Iran