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  
Fax: +1 (212) 867-7086

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)
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,

Dina Rizk Khoury
MESA President
Professor, George Washington University

Laurie Brand
Chair, Committee on Academic Freedom
Professor, University of Southern California
Re: Well-being of Dr. Kylie Moore-Gilbert
19 May 2020
Page 3

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