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5 August 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
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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 escalating concern for the condition of Dr. Kylie Moore-Gilbert after her transfer from Evin prison to Qarchak, a remote desert facility which has been labelled 'the worst prison in the world for women.' We previously wrote to you on 19 May 2020 to protest the harsh and unlawful treatment of Dr. Moore-Gilbert and the inhumane conditions of her detention. We noted with deep alarm that letters and reports from prison had indicated that Dr. Moore-Gilbert was being held in intolerable and restrictive conditions that had severely impacted her physical and mental health. Our concern for Dr. Moore-Gilbert has been heightened by her forcible transfer from Evin to Qarchak and by reports that she is 'tearful, terrified, and unwell' and may be at serious risk in a prison notorious for criminal violence and overcrowdedness, in addition to experiencing outbreaks of transmissible diseases, including Covid-19.

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. Moore-Gilbert is a dual Australian-British national who obtained a PhD from the University of Melbourne in 2017 and was appointed the same year an Early Career Academic Fellow and University Lecturer in Islamic Studies, also at the University of Melbourne. A scholar of Shi'i Islam, Dr. Moore-Gilbert travelled to Iran in August 2018 to attend an academic conference, with an official invitation, but was arrested in September at the airport in Tehran as she was preparing to leave the country. Since her arrest by the intelligence arm of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corp (IRGC), the Iranian authorities still have not announced any formal charges nor presented any evidence against her, despite trying Dr. Moore-Gilbert in secret in 2019, sentencing her to ten years in prison, presumably on charges of espionage. An appeal of her sentence failed.

Nearly two years have passed since Dr. Moore-Gilbert's arrest, and it is with profound dismay that we observe that the conditions of her detention appear to have worsened over time. Dr. Moore-Gilbert was held initially in Ward 2A, the high-security unit of the Revolutionary Guards' own prison within Evin. Ward 2A is beyond the reach of government oversight and is supposed to serve only as a temporary detention facility, yet Dr. Moore-Gilbert's repeated requests to be transferred to the regular women's ward at Evin fell on deaf ears. In addition, Dr. Moore-Gilbert spent prolonged periods in solitary confinement with nearly no contact with her lawyer, family members, or Australian Embassy officials. In letters smuggled out from Evin, Dr. Moore-Gilbert wrote of feeling 'abandoned' and in extreme isolation, while other reports indicated that she was subject to beatings by prison guards after forming a 'choir' of inmates who hummed together to keep their spirits up.

On the weekend of 25-26 July, Dr. Moore-Gilbert was transferred, suddenly and seemingly without warning, from Evin to Qarchak, 35 kilometres away. Like Ward 2A at Evin, Qarchak is controlled by the IRGC and has been severely criticized by impartial rights groups for a pattern of gross violations of human rights inside its walls. We are gravely concerned by reports of a further deterioration in the conditions under which Dr. Moore-Gilbert is being held and what this may mean for her physical and mental wellbeing. In a voice recording from Qarchak, Dr. Moore-Gilbert has again expressed feelings of hopelessness and depression at this latest worsening in the conditions of her imprisonment.

Your Excellencies, the Committee on Academic Freedom has followed Dr. Moore-Gilbert's case with mounting alarm at the lack of any form of due process or respect for internationally recognized norms, as well as the direct attack on academic freedom that Dr. Moore-Gilbert's continuing incarceration on secret charges represents. We note that while Iran placed more than 100,000 prisoners on furlough during the Covid-19 pandemic, Dr. Moore-Gilbert was not among them, which suggests that the Iranian authorities may view her as a political bargaining chip. We call on the Iranian authorities to abide by their obligations under both national and international law to respect due process, to treat prisoners humanely, and to provide them with psychological and physical medical care, as well as access to counsel, family contact, and consular services. We ask also that you reverse Dr. Moore-Gilbert's baseless conviction and make immediate arrangements for her return home to Australia.

Sincerely,



Dina Rizk Khoury
MESA President
Professor, George Washington University



Re: Concern for the safety of Australian-British dual national imprisoned in Iran
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laurie Brand', is written in a cursive style.

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

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