American and Western Hostages

June 2020

UNITED AGAINST NUCLEAR IRAN

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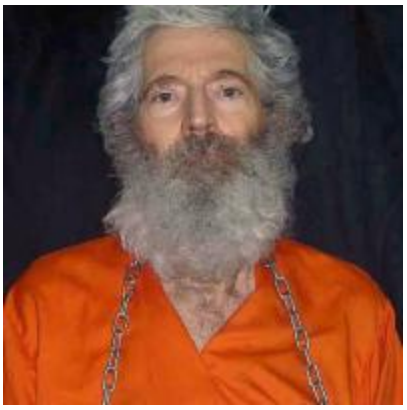
UNITED AGAINST NUCLEAR IRAN

American Hostages

Robert Levinson
American Private Investigator and Retired FBI Agent



Disappearance

American private investigator and retired FBI agent Robert Levinson disappeared on March 9, 2007, on Iran's Kish Island, while reportedly on an unauthorized CIA mission to investigate corruption by Iranian regime officials. Levinson's family received a hostage video and photos of him in 2010–11. That aside, he was not "publicly seen or heard from since" his disappearance. A U.S. district court judge found in March of 2020 that the Iranian regime most likely took Mr. Levinson hostage. (See the "Lawsuit" section below.)

Treatment in Captivity

In November 2010, the Levinson family received a hostage video of Mr. Levinson in which he appeared gaunt, emaciated, and heavily bearded. Levinson was known before his disappearance to suffer from gout, hypertension, and diabetes. In April 2011, the Levinson family received a series of pictures of him. Levinson's family has never received any other information from his captors. A U.S. district court judge found in March of 2020 that the Iranian regime most likely tortured Mr. Levinson. (See the "Lawsuit" section below.)

Attempts to Locate

In April 2007, about a month after Mr. Levinson disappeared, the Iranian regime's English-language media channel Press TV published an article entitled "Ex-FBI man in Iran not 'missing' at all." The report stated that an unnamed "American businessman and retired FBI agent gone missing from Iran's Kish Island" had been "in the hands of Iranian security forces since the early hours of March 9." The piece added that while U.S.–Iran tensions "complicated" the situation, "the authorities [were] well on the way to finishing the procedural arrangements that could see him freed in a matter of days." No further such reports appeared in Iran's state-run media.

In March 2011, then–Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton stated that the U.S. government had "received recent indications that Bob is being held somewhere in southwest Asia."(A State Department spokesperson said in 2009 that southwest Asia includes Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.)

In an interview in September of 2012, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, then president of Iran, did not deny that Iran held Levinson and indicated that Iran and the U.S. had negotiated about Levinson.

In December 2013, Iran-based American fugitive Dawud Salahuddin disclosed that he witnessed Iranian police detaining Mr. Levinson at the time of his disappearance. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad

Javad Zarif has "denied all knowledge of Levinson's whereabouts." Yet, there is "consensus" among U.S. officials that the Iranian government is responsible for images taken of Mr. Levinson by his captors.

According to documents disclosed on January 22, 2016, Iranian officials knew far more about Mr. Levinson then previously suggested. The documents are from a memo sent to the FBI in 2011 after a meeting in Paris between an American, a Russian, and Iran's ambassador to France.

During the meeting, the Iranian ambassador said that his government was willing to release Mr. Levinson, who was being held by Iran, if the U.S. helped delay an assessment criticizing Iran's nuclear activities. "The ambassador made it clear that they have Robert Levinson and that they are willing to release him without conditions," said the report. "They do, however, want tangible, 'symbolic' assurances that the messages they are sending have been received at the highest levels." It is unclear what actions, if any, American officials took after the meeting.

In January 2016, President Barack Obama said Iran had "agreed to deepen our coordination as we work to locate Robert Levinson." Secretary of State John Kerry stated a day later that "the Iranians are cooperating" in the effort. However, at a press briefing on October 18, 2016, State Department spokesman Mark Toner said the Iranians "haven't lived up to" their commitment to providing information about Mr. Levinson's whereabouts.

In 2017, a National Security Council spokesperson said executive-branch officials had contacted Mr. Levinson's relatives to promise them that the Trump administration was prioritizing his case.
In October of 2019, the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances informed the Levinson family that "According to the statement of Tehran's Justice Department, Mr. Robert Alan Levinson has an on going case in the Public Prosecution and Revolutionary Court of Tehran." However, Tehran later said that the "on going case" was simply an investigation of Mr. Levinson's disappearance.

In November of 2019, the U.S. State Department offered a $20 million reward for information leading to Levinson's "safe location, recovery, and return." The FBI has long extended a similar reward of $5 million.

Lawsuit

In March of 2017, Mr. Levinson's wife and children sued Iran for taking him hostage and torturing him, seeking $150 million in compensatory damages and $1.35 billion in punitive ones. Iran did not contest the lawsuit, and on March 9, 2020, a U.S. district court judge for the District of Columbia entered a default judgment for the Levinsons. The judge also ruled to appoint a "special master" to assess damages for Mr. Levinson's wife and each of his children and recommend the amount of damages awarded.

Death

On March 25, 2020, Mr. Levinson's family announced that "We recently received information from U.S. officials that has led both them and us to conclude that our wonderful husband and father died while in

Iranian custody. We don't know when or how he died, only that it was prior to the COVID-19 pandemic." They added, "His body has not yet been returned to us for a proper burial. We don't even know when, or even if, his body would be returned to us. This is the very definition of cruelty."

President Donald Trump said Mr. Levinson was "a gentleman" and "outstanding," but expressed doubt about the former FBI agent's purported death. "They've been making the statement to the family, I believe," he stated. "It's not looking good; he wasn't well for years anyway, in Iran. It's not looking promising ... we feel terribly for the family. It's not looking great, but I won't accept that he's dead. They haven't told us that he's dead, but a lot of people are thinking that that's the case."

U.S. National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien later expressed more certainty about Mr. Levinson's fate, saying, "While the investigation is ongoing, we believe that Bob Levinson may have passed away some time ago… Iran must provide a complete accounting of what occurred with Bob Levinson before the United States can fully accept what happened in this case." Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif reportedly informed the U.S. government of Mr. Levinson's death.

4,766 days passed between Mr. Levinson's disappearance and the announcement of his likely death—over 13 years, and more than ten times as long as the 1979–81 Iran hostage crisis. Mr. Levinson may be the longest-held hostage in American history, depending on when he died.

Siamak Namazi

Iranian-American Businessman and Consultant, Son of Imprisoned Baquer Namazi

Arrest

Siamak was arrested on October 15, 2015, when he traveled to Iran to visit relatives and attend a funeral. He is currently being held at Evin Prison's Ward 2-A, which is controlled by the intelligence branch of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

Biography

Siamak Namazi is an Iranian-American businessman residing in Dubai. Siamak's father, Baquer, is a former governor under the Shah of the oil-rich province of Khuzestan in western Iran. Siamak's family came to the United States in 1983, when he was a boy. He became a U.S. citizen in 1993.

After graduating from Tufts University, Namazi returned to Iran for compulsory military service. From 1994 to 1996, he worked as a duty officer with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning in Tehran. In 1998, Namazi founded Future Alliance International, a Washington, D.C.-based consulting company focused on the risk of doing business in Iran. Namazi later worked as a Managing Director at a family consulting firm founded in Tehran that later moved to Dubai, the Atieh Group.

He has served as a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader and is a former public policy scholar at the Wilson Center in Washington, D.C., where he advocated for closer relations between the U.S. and

Iran. He had been the head of the strategic planning division for Crescent Petroleum, an oil and gas company based in the United Arab Emirates, when he was arrested in Iran.

Treatment in Prison

According to his brother Babak, Siamak has spent most of his time in prison in solitary confinement, has been tasered, beaten, and otherwise tortured, and has undergone lengthy interrogations. His cell does not have a bed, and he sleeps on the floor. On February 21, 2016, Siamak's mother, Effie, wrote in a Facebook post that Siamak called her and said he had broken off a hunger strike he had recently initiated. Siamak's health has reportedly deteriorated significantly during his captivity.

Charges, Trial, and Sentencing

On July 11, 2016, Tehran's prosecutor announced that Siamak had been indicted but did not specify the charges. On October 16, 2016, Mizan News Agency, a website linked to Iran's judiciary reported that Siamak and his father Baquer were each sentenced to 10 years in prison.

On October 17, the same news agency published a short video showing Siamak's arrest as evidence of "America's humiliation." According to Mizan, the two men were convicted of "cooperating with the hostile government of America." On October 18, 2016, the judiciary's official news website reported that Siamak and his father were sentenced to 10 years in prison for cooperating with the U.S. government. On August 28, 2017, their appeals were denied.

There is no evidence Siamak has engaged in anything beyond what his business and academic work required. His friends and family have vociferously appealed for his release. As the novel coronavirus ravaged Iran in the spring of 2020, and particularly endangered inmates living in the appalling conditions of the Iranian prison system, the regime temporarily released tens of thousands of prisoners. The Swiss government, which handles U.S. diplomatic interests in Iran, has requested that Siamak be granted a humanitarian furlough.

Baquer Namazi

Iranian-American Former Senior UN Official, Father of Imprisoned Siamak Namazi

Biography

Iranian-American Baquer Namazi, born in 1936, is a former Iranian provincial governor under the Shah and UNICEF representative who worked in several countries, including Kenya, Somalia, and Egypt. Baquer most recently ran Hamyaran, an umbrella organization of a number of different Iranian NGOs.

Arrest

On February 22, 2016, Baquer was arrested after arriving in Iran to visit his imprisoned son Siamak. Security forces detained Baquer at

Tehran's Imam Khomeini airport at night, as he returned home to Iran from Dubai, where he had gone for a medical check-up and to visit his grandchildren.

According to a report by the IRGC-affiliated news agency Fars, Namazi was arrested in order "to uncover the complex layers of vast financial and intelligence corruption by a network that is associated to the UK and America." Baquer is also accused in the report of training his son Siamak in "espionage and infiltration and subversion operations." According to a state-run television news program, Baquer has worked with foreign political figures and groups ever since he came to Iran in 2002 to create a "network that would implement the ambitions of Western spy agencies and anti-revolutionary lobbies."

Treatment in Prison

Baquer was held in Tehran's notoriously brutal Evin Prison, where he was denied access to their family's lawyer and spent long periods in solitary confinement. According to his wife, Baquer has a severe heart condition, as well as a host of other serious medical problems that require treatment, including epilepsy and severe blockages in the major arteries to his brain. According to Babak, Baquer's son, his father has lost about 25 pounds during his time behind bars. According to the New York Times, Baquer was hospitalized four times during the year from January of 2017 to January of 2018. He also underwent triple bypass surgery during his captivity.

In August of 2018, Baquer was granted an extended furlough due to his medical problems, and he remains free as of October of 2019. His family has asked the Iranian government to permit Baquer to travel outside Iran to receive treatment.

Charges, Trial, and Sentencing

On October 18, 2016, it was announced that Baquer was sentenced to 10 years in prison and fined $4.8 million on charges of cooperating with the U.S. government in a trial that only last a few hours. Effie, Baquer's wife, announced on Facebook, "Now both my innocent son Siamak and my Baquer are in prison for no reason." On August 28, 2017, their appeals were denied.

Karan Vafadari and Afarin Niasari

Art Gallery Owners

Biography

Karan Vafadari is an American-Iranian dual national belonging to the Zoroastrian faith. Karan attended Tehran's prestigious Alborz High School and graduated from New York University (NYU) with a degree in electronic engineering and management. While his three children live in the U.S., Karan and his wife, Afarin Niasari, an architect who holds a U.S. green card, live in Tehran and manage their art gallery, Aun.

Arrest

Afarin Niasari was detained by IRGC agents at the Tehran airport in late July 2016 as she was about to board a flight to attend a family wedding abroad. The agents told her to call her husband and ask him to come to the airport. When he arrived, he was also arrested and both were taken to Iran's notorious Evin Prison.

The following day, the couple was brought in handcuffs to their home, where agents took down hanging works of art, smashing some of them in the yard while confiscating others. They were then taken to their art gallery, where agents destroyed or and impounded more of their artwork.

On August 2, 2016, Tehran Prosecutor Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi said that two unnamed "Iranian dual nationals" (apparently referring to Vafadari and Niasari), had been charged with organizing mixed-gender parties for foreign diplomats and their Iranian associates and serving alcohol in their home, which was a "center of immorality and prostitution." He claimed that 4,000 liters of alcohol had been found at the couple's residence. Soon thereafter, a member of parliament, Hadji Deligani, publicly referred to the two by their first names and made similar accusations, adding that the two committed "extortion."

The legal proceedings and Iranian media have not mentioned that Vafadari is Zoroastrian, and therefore not subject to Islamic laws on alcohol and mixed gatherings. Under Iran's constitution, Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians "are free to perform their religious rites and ceremonies, and to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education." Karan's U.S. based sister, Kateh Vafadari added in a letter to the Supreme Leader: "In our faith and traditions, parties can be mixed. At the same time, we respect other religious traditions, such as Shiism, where men and women guests are in separate quarters."

Treatment in Prison

Kateh Vafadari stated that Karan and Afarin were initially held in solitary confinement for a month at Evin Prison's Ward 2-A, which is controlled by the IRGC's intelligence organization, and later transferred to a group holding cell. Intelligence officials interrogated Afarin and pressured her to spy for them on the international art community, including all her friends and even her husband. When she refused, she was thrown back into solitary confinement.

The Vafadari family were able to visit Karan and Afarin in prison several times. IRGC intelligence agents repeatedly promised family members that the couple would soon go free, but the two remained imprisoned. In the letter Kateh wrote to the Supreme Leader, she said that the jailed couple has been subjected to "extortion, property seizure, and national security threats" ever since their arrest. For months, the Vafadaris were held without being charged, and they were subjected to repeated interrogations, denied legal counsel, and placed repeatedly back in solitary confinement.

Charges, Trial, and Sentencing

According to Kateh, in a preliminary hearing in March of 2017, Judge Abolghassem Salavati reinstated charges against the couple that were previously dropped due to lack of evidence. Salavati is nicknamed "the hanging judge" or "the judge of death" for imposing harsh sentences, including capital punishment, in political cases.

The charges he reinstated against Karan and Afarin reportedly included "attempting to overthrow the Islamic Republic," collaboration with enemies of the state, espionage, "recruiting and signing up spies through foreign embassies," "assembly and collusion against national security," associating with foreign diplomats, holding dual nationality, possession of alcoholic beverages in their home, and using their residence as a center of prostitution. Salavati also barred the couple's lawyer from the hearing and ordered Karan to fire her.

In January of 2018, Karan released a letter from prison revealing that the couple had been sentenced. On the charge of espionage, Afarin was sentenced to 16 years in prison, and Karan was given 27 years' imprisonment and 124 lashes, had all his property confiscated, and was fined $243,000. Karan also received 15 years in prison for hosting parties and celebrations in his home; three years and a $162,000 fine for accepting gifts of alcoholic beverages from foreigners, including diplomats; and 18 months, 64 lashes, and a fine of $38,000 for consuming wine.

Karan Vafadari claimed that the authorities had confiscated his property by unprecedentedly employing a 1928 law permitting the state to sell or seize the assets who voluntary renounced their Iranian nationality. However, Vafadari never gave up his citizenship.

Karan and Afarin sought to be released pending their appeal, but Judge Salavati imposed bail equivalent to $13.5 million for each of them. When Vafadari's family tried to post bail for Afarin, the judge reportedly refused, saying, "If I wanted her free, I wouldn't have set [the bail] so high." However, in July of 2018, Karan's son Cyrus stated that the two had finally been released on bail.

International Outcry

The Vafadari family initially decided not to publicize their case, hoping that it would be resolved more quickly through private channels. However, due to anonymous threats and blackmail demands by phone, Kateh Vafadari, went public on December 2, 2016, on behalf of her family with a letter to Iran's Supreme Leader calling for the immediate release of her brother and his wife. According to Kateh, the phone calls by several unknown individuals seeking to extort money started after an Iranian member of parliament publicly mentioned the detained couple by name in November of 2016. Kateh Vafadari is running a campaign for Karan and Afarin's release. Additionally, Karan's son, Cyrus, drafted a Change.org petition in support of his parents' release that was signed by over 15,000 people.

UNITED AGAINST NUCLEAR IRAN

Gholamreza (Reza) "Robin" Shahini
Iranian-American human rights activist and student

Arrest

Iranian-American Gholamrez (Reza) Shahini, who goes by "Robin," was detained by Iranian authorities on July 11, 2016, and released from prison on bail in 2017. Shortly after graduating from San Diego State University, the 46-year-old returned to Iran to see his sick mother on May 25, 2016. On July 11, 2016, security forces arrested Shahini in the northern city of Gorgan. According to Shahini, "it was a terrifying moment, and they blindfolded me and they took me to the custody and I did not know where I was." Shahini left Iran as a refugee in 1988 and lived in Germany before moving to the United States in the early 2000s. Speculating on why Shahini was arrested, Denera Ragoonanan, a friend of his, said, "Robin has been known for his advocacy of human rights on social media. This advocacy, unfortunately, did not sit well with the Iranian government." In addition, according to family members, Shahini converted to Christianity, which could have added to his troubles with the Islamic Republic. Shahini also had planned to continue his studies following acceptance into a graduate program in homeland security. This fact may have contributed to the Iranian judiciary's decision to prosecute him.

Treatment in Prison

Reza has asthma and before he was detained one of his teeth was operated on and needed further treatment. The authorities did not respond to his family's requests to send him to a dentist outside the prison to prevent an infection. Shahini was held for six days in solitary confinement at the Neynava Detention Center in Gorgan and then transferred to the city's main prison, where he was held in solitary confinement for four days. Shahini's family also alleged that authorities withheld his asthma medicine and placed him in smoking areas of Gorgan prison to aggravate his condition. In addition, Shahini said, speaking to VICE News via phone from prison, "they were interrogating me every morning, every afternoon, and I was always by myself in my cell." When his sentence was announced on October 24, 2016, Shahini said that he was planning to go on a hunger strike to protest his imprisonment.

Charges and Conviction

On August 16, 2016, the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (ICHRI) reported that Shahini was formally charged with "acting against national security," "participating in protest gatherings in 2009," "collaborating with Voice of America (VOA) television," and "insulting the sacred on Facebook," but that his lawyer had not been granted access to the evidence being used against Shahini.

ICHRI viewed the arrest of Shahini as a sign of Iran's "lasting paranoia" over the Green Revolution of 2009, which authorities accused Shahini of actively supporting. Shahini told Vice News, "Whatever information they had is all in the pictures I posted in Facebook, in my web blog, and they use all those evidence to accuse me." He acknowledged that he voiced support for the Green Movement in its

protests against the disputed 2009 election results, but had since been a supporter of current President Hassan Rouhani.

On October 24, 2016, it was reported that Robin Shahini was sentenced to 18 years in prison for "collaboration with a hostile government." Shahini said he "just laughed" after hearing his sentence. Shahini was also convicted of "insulting sanctities." That charge can include a number of offenses, such as criticizing Islam or principles of the Islamic Republic. The sentence was issued after only one session before the Revolutionary Court in Gorgan on October 15, 2016. Shahini's trial lasted only three hours, and his lawyer had less than 30 minutes to defend him. Shahini was released on bail in 2017 after a hunger strike.

Western Hostages

Abdolrasoul Dorri-Esfahani

Iranian-Canadian Accountant and Nuclear Negotiator

Biography

Abdolrasoul Dorri-Esfahani is an Iranian-Canadian accountant and former adviser to the governor of the Central Bank of Iran. He oversaw negotiations on the banking provisions of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, also known as the Iran nuclear deal.

Arrest

Dorri-Esfahani was arrested in August of 2016 as he was about to leave Iran and return to Canada. He was released on bail pending trial.

Charges, Trial, and Sentencing

Dorri-Esfahani was accused of having links to British intelligence and giving sensitive information to the United States in exchange for payments by both countries. In October 2017, the judiciary announced that Dorri-Esfahani had been sentenced to five years in prison and Iran's Tasnim News Agency reported that he would return to jail to begin his sentence. His appeal was rejected, even though Iran's intelligence minister claimed that he was innocent and had even cooperated with the ministry's counterintelligence branch.

Smear Campaign

In September of 2018, the intelligence wing of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) released a propaganda video portraying Dorri-Esfahani as having been paid to infiltrate Iran's negotiating team for the nuclear deal and being influential in the deal's formation. The video claimed Dorri-Esfahani worked with multinational firms like PricewaterhouseCoopers to provide key information to foreign negotiators.

UNITED AGAINST NUCLEAR IRAN

Ahmadreza Djalali

Iranian-Swedish Expert in Emergency Disaster Medicine

Biography

Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, an Iranian-born Swedish resident (now citizen) and expert in emergency disaster medicine, is a scientist at the Research Center in Emergency and Disaster Medicine (CRIMEDIN) run by the University of Eastern Piedmont in Novara, Italy and a professor at the Free University Brussels (VUB). His efforts have been described by his colleague, Caroline Pauwels, rector of the Free University in Berlin, as "important humanitarian work." Dr. Djalali has a PhD in medical science (disaster medicine) from Karolinska Institute in Sweden. He has published 46 scientific articles in journals across the world. Some of his previous work included collaboration with Tehran University and Shiraz University, as well as the Natural Disaster Medicine Institute in Iran.

Arrest

Dr. Djalali was arrested on April 24, 2016, in Tehran by agents of Iran's Ministry of Intelligence. Djalali was visiting Tehran from Sweden, where he lives with his wife and two children, at the official invitation of Tehran University.

On January 5, 2016, after keeping silent for several months, Djalali's wife, Vida Mehrannia, publicly revealed that her husband was imprisoned in Iran. According to Vida, "Ahmadreza had always traveled to Iran by invitation of state organizations, including the Red Crescent, and never experienced problems before." The family had remained quiet after his arrest because they hoped, to no avail, that there was some "mistake or misunderstanding, and that he would be acquitted and released."

In an undated letter smuggled out of prison, Djalali wrote that the regime had arrested him for refusing to spy for Iran's intelligence ministry on European Union states

Treatment in Prison

Djalali was jailed in Evin Prison without trial since his arrest on bogus charges of "collaborating with enemy states." Djalali was reportedly placed in solitary confinement and interrogated by the intelligence ministry for seven months, without access to legal counsel, before being moved to a general ward. His wife noted that "[a]]fter he was transferred to a public ward, he was permitted legal counsel, but his lawyer told us he cannot talk about the case because it involves national security."

On December 25, 2016, when his interrogators threatened him with a harsh sentence, Djalali began a hunger strike. According to his wife, "he says that if they are going to execute him he prefers to die under hunger strike."

Iranian state television broadcast a forced confession by Djalali on December 17, 2017. His wife said that the authorities threatened to kill his family if he did not read the statement.

Djalali is experiencing severe health issues. His wife said in February of 2019 that after receiving test results indicating he may have leukemia, he was scheduled to leave prison to see cancer and blood specialists. However, the authorities stopped him from going because he refused to wear his prison uniform while away from Evin.

Djalali also reportedly lost 18 kilograms due to his hunger strike.

In July of 2019, United Nations human rights experts expressed concern that Iran was denying Djalali access to health care.

Djalali's wife stated that he had been moved on July 29, 2019, from Evin to an undisclosed location where he was in solitary confinement, watched by a camera.

Death Sentence

On February 3, 2017, Ahmadreza's employer, Free University Brussels (VUB), announced that he had been sentenced to death and that the execution was scheduled to take place in two weeks. Ahmadreza informed his family in Iran that he was forced to sign a confession, which became the basis for his death sentence. According to VUB, the charges appeared to be related to Djalali's international contacts. The University program draws students and professors from around the world, including countries such as the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and Israel.

Djalali reportedly was convicted of "working with enemy states" and "spreading corruption on earth" in a trial before Judge Abolghassem Salavati, who is nicknamed "the hanging judge" or "the judge of death" for imposing harsh sentences, including capital punishment, in political cases. Djalali claimed that he had been compelled to make videotaped confessions, psychologically tortured, and threatened with death.

In December of 2017, his sentence was upheld.

International Outcry

A petition calling for Djalali's release and signed by over 300,000 supporters was sent to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. In August of 2019, Zarif said the Iranian government would "do our best on humanitarian grounds to see if the sentences on Mr. Djalali can be delayed, but he has been accused of multiple capital crimes… and he has been convicted of them."

In February of 2018, the Swedish government granted Djalali citizenship in order to improve their ability to negotiate with Iran over his case.

In December of 2018, 121 Nobel Laureates wrote to Supreme Leader Khamenei, asking him to permit Djalali to "return home to his wife and children and continue his scholarly work for the benefit of mankind."

In July of 2019, United Nations human rights experts expressed concern that Iran was denying Djalali access to health care.

Anousheh Ashoori

British-Iranian Businessman

Biography

Anousheh Ashoori is a British-Iranian dual national and businessman who ran a building-supplies company and lived periodically in the U.K. since he was 17. His daughter Eilka, an actress residing in London, said, "My father has nothing to do with politics and told us not to get involved in politics."

Arrest

Ashoori was detained in Tehran in 2017 while visiting his mother.

Treatment in Prison

The regime has not given Ashoori British consular access because Iran does not recognize dual nationality.

Trial and Sentencing

Iran's judiciary announced on August 27, 2019 that Ashoori had been convicted for connections to the Mossad and "acquiring illegitimate wealth" and sentenced to a combined 12 years in prison.

International Outcry

A spokesperson for the British Foreign Office said, "We have been supporting the family of [Ashoori] since his detention and our embassy in Tehran continues to request consular access, The treatment of all dual nationals detained in Iran is a priority and we raise their cases at the most senior levels. We urge Iran to let them be reunited with their families."

UNITED AGAINST NUCLEAR IRAN

Aras Amiri
British Resident and Iranian Citizen

Biography

Aras Amiri is an Iranian citizen and British permanent resident who worked in London for the British Council, a U.K. government body that promotes education and culture. According to the Council's chief executive, Amiri was "employed for five years in London to help greater appreciation of Iranian culture in the U.K., for example supporting translations of Iranian books into English." She also studied art philosophy at Kingston University in London.

Arrest

Amiri was arrested in March of 2018 on the way to Tehran's airport after visiting her grandmother. She traveled to Iran once or twice a year to see family, according to her fiancé, James Tyson. Amiri was released on bail in May of 2018 but arrested again on September 7 of that year.

Treatment in Prison

Amiri is being held in Tehran's notoriously brutal Evin Prison. Her fiancé claims that Amiri "was led into a series of interrogations, imprisoned, solitary confinement and then a period of interrogations over two months." Amiri spent a total of 30 days in solitary confinement.

Charges, Trial, and Sentencing

Iran's judiciary charged her with "acting against national security" and "cultural infiltration by the British intelligence services in Iranian internal affairs." Amiri said in a letter to the head of Iran's judiciary that while she was out on bail, her interrogators contacted her and asked her to spy for them in the U.K. After she refused, they soon rearrested her and added a new charge, "founding and directing a network for overthrowing the regime."

Amiri was tried before the Revolutionary Court in Tehran in February and March of 2019. Trial judge Abolqassem Salavati is nicknamed "the hanging judge" or "the judge of death" for imposing harsh sentences, including capital punishment, in political cases.

On May 13, 2019, a judiciary spokesperson announced that an unnamed woman (presumably Amiri) who headed the British Council's Iran desk had been sentenced to 10 years in prison for espionage, namely, utilizing her arts and theater connections to "influence and infiltrate" Iran culturally. He added that the woman had confessed to working with British intelligence. Amiri stated that she only learned of her sentencing and the new espionage charge when watching television in prison.

Amiri appealed her sentence and wrote a letter pleading her case to the head of Iran's judiciary, Ebrahim Raisi. However, Iran's supreme court rejected her appeal in August of 2019.

Temporary Release

Amiri has been temporarily released, according to a report by the *National* on April 9, 2020. She was furloughed as the highly dangerous COVID19 virus ravaged Iran. Inmates living in appalling conditions in Iran's prison system are at particular risk of contracting the virus. As of April 3, 2020, Iran had released a reported 100,000–some odd prisoners, presumably to reduce the population density in its prisons and thereby minimize the spread of the virus.

Fariba Adelkhah

French-Iranian Academic

Biography

Fariba Adelkhah is a French-Iranian anthropologist at the university SciencesPo in Paris. She has published a study of Islamic women in Iran and, more recently, has focused on Shiite clerics' movements between Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

Arrest

In June 2019, Adelkhah was arrested in Iran, where she was conducting research and visiting her mother. Her SciencesPo colleague and longtime companion Roland Marchal, who had flown to Tehran to spend the Eid holiday with her, was also arrested.

Treatment in Prison

Marchal was held, and Adelkhah remains in Tehran's notoriously brutal Evin Prison. Unlike Marchal, Adelkhah has not been allowed to meet with French consular officials because Iran does not recognize dual nationality.

On December 24, 2019, Adelkhah started a hunger strike to demand that the regime release Marchal and her. She ended it on February 12, 2020, due to health concerns, and shortly after that, Adelkhah was admitted to the Evin Prison's hospital for acute kidney damage.

In early February of 2020, Marchal and Adelkhah petitioned for permission to marry so that they could meet with each other in prison. No judgment on their petition was made public.

Charges, Trial, and Sentencing

The regime held Marchal and Adelkhah for months without making criminal charges public, but finally disclosed that he would be tried for "collusion to endanger national security," while she would be tried for both that charge and "propaganda against the political system of the Islamic Republic." Their trial commenced on March 3, 2020, though only Adelkhah appeared, and further proceedings were postponed until April 18, 2020.

After the couple's trial began on March 3, 2020, their Paris-based support group condemned the hearing as a "masquerade of justice" and accused the regime of "deliberately putting in danger the lives of our two colleagues—already weakened—by keeping them in an overcrowded jail while the country is hit by a serious coronavirus epidemic whose scale is being played down and which is not under control."

On May 16, 2020, Adelkhah was sentenced to five years in prison for the aforementioned "collusion" charge and one year for the "propaganda" charge. Her lawyer said that he expected the prison terms would be served concurrently.

Marchal's Release

Iran freed Marchal on March 20, 2020, in exchange for France simultaneously releasing Jalal Rohollahnejad, an Iranian accused of violating U.S. sanctions laws. Marchal returned to France the next day. The regime continues to hold Adelkhah hostage in Evin Prison.

International Outcry

In July of 2019, French President Emmanuel Macron personally asked Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to explain the reason for Adelkhah's arrest. France's foreign ministry also insisted on consular access to her "without delay," to no avail. In October 2019, the ministry outright demanded Adelkhah's release. In December of 2019, the French government summoned Iran's ambassador and demanded again that Marchal and Adelkhah be released and that French consular officials be allowed to meet with them. France's foreign minister reiterated those demands to his Iranian counterpart in February of 2020, and President Macron again urged Tehran to free Adelkhah after Marchal was freed in March of 2020.

SciencesPo has claimed that it is taking several steps to help Adelkhah and Marchal, working closely with the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs and the French National Centre for Scientific Research. The university specifically mentioned that it had made sure that the two hostages had a very experienced attorney who is on the Iranian regime's approved list. In July of 2019, the SciencesPo faculty issued a message expressing their "warmest support" for Adekhah and her family and their "strong hope" for her speedy release. The International Sociological Association endorsed that message.

Also, in July of 2019, the president of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) and the chair of its Committee on Academic Freedom sent a letter in support of Adelkhah to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader and Major General Hossein Salami, the IRGC's commander-in-chief. The MESA officials objected to the regime's increasing imprisonment of academics and urged the recipients to free Adelkhah immediately and make sure she returned to France safely.

In May of 2020, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian decried Adelkhah's sentence to prison time. "This sentencing was founded on no serious elements and was politically motivated," he said. "So, we firmly say to the Iranian authorities to release Fariba Adelkhah without delay." Le Drian added that "This decision makes our relations with the Iranian authorities a lot more difficult."

UNITED AGAINST NUCLEAR IRAN

Kameel Ahmady
British-Iranian Academic

Biography

Kameel Ahmady is a British-Iranian social anthropologist who has conducted research in areas including female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage in Iran. He published a book in 2015 that claimed that FGM is performed in at least four major Iranian provinces, even as local authorities ignored the issue or claimed that FGM was not being carried out. According to Ahmady's website, he studied at several European universities, including the London School of Economics and Political Science. Ahmady is an ethnic Kurd.

Arrest

Ahmady was arrested on August 11, 2019, and jailed in Tehran's notoriously brutal Evin Prison, according to his wife, Shafagh Rahmani.

Treatment in Prison

Ahmady was initially placed in solitary confinement. On August 28, 2019, Rahmani claimed the authorities had not allowed her to visit Ahmady and the two were only allowed to speak by phone three times. She added that she was not told the reason for his arrest and that the judiciary had rejected several attorneys that Ahmady's family had hired to represent him. In mid-September, Rahmani and Ahmady were finally able to meet at the prosecutor's office. He told her that he had been moved to a cell with other inmates and was no longer being interrogated.

Release on Bail

Ahmady was released on a five-million-rial bail, equivalent to about $40,000 U.S.

Charges

In mid-September, Rahmani said that the authorities had extended his detention by another month and still had not disclosed the charges against him, telling her that he faced several charges for unnamed actions, but Ahmady had told her that his interrogators had focused on his research activities.
On October 1, 2019, the judiciary confirmed Ahmady's arrest for the first time, claiming he was connected to institutes affiliated with foreign intelligence agencies. A judiciary spokesman said that Ahmady's case was still in its initial investigation stage.

UNITED AGAINST NUCLEAR IRAN

Kamran Ghaderi
Iranian-Austrian Businessman

Biography

Iranian-Austrian businessman Kamran Ghaderi is the CEO of Avanoc, an Austrian IT management and consulting company that has operated in Iran for many years. Ghaderi had been living with his wife and three children in Vienna at the time of his arrest.

Arrest

Ghaderi was detained upon arrival in Tehran on January 2, 2016, when visiting for an official Austrian-Iranian trade meeting attended by senior Austrian officials. In response to his arrest, his wife Harika said, "everything he's been doing is legal, he was working in Iran; it's not forbidden."

Treatment in Prison

Ghaderi is currently being held at Tehran's notoriously brutal Evin Prison, and was kept in solitary confinement for almost a year. He has been denied access to Austrian consular assistance and was not allowed to speak with a lawyer until two days before his trial. He was allowed to call his mother in April of 2016 for the first time since his arrest. Since then, she has been allowed to visit him in prison every other week. Harika said her husband has lost a lot of weight since his arrest. In December 2018, a report claimed that the authorities were denying him treatment for a tumor in his left leg and had not provided him the opportunity to do physical therapy to recover from surgery to relieve disc pain in his back.

Charges, Trial, and Sentencing

On October 18, 2016, Tehran Prosecutor General Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi said that Ghaderi was among six individuals who received 10-year sentences for spying and working with the hostile government in Washington. According to the anonymous source, the prosecution used a coerced confession to convict Ghaderi. "They threatened him that if he didn't cooperate, his wife would be taken into custody. They forced him to sign a confession under intimidation and psychological torture, otherwise they had nothing to convict him of espionage." Ghaderi also stated that his interrogators lied to him, claiming that they had arrested his mother and brother and would keep them imprisoned until he agreed to make their desired confession.

Responding to the charges, his wife said, "How can they say something like that about Kamran? I don't understand," adding that he had no ties to the United States and was not involved in politics. She said that the family is planning to appeal the sentence.

UNITED AGAINST NUCLEAR IRAN

Kylie Moore-Gilbert
Australian-British Academic

Biography

Kylie Moore-Gilbert is an Australian and British citizen and a lecturer in Islamic studies at the University of Melbourne. She has a doctorate in Gulf studies from that institution. She has published research on the 2011 Arab Spring and numerous Gulf political issues. Her most recent grant-funded project was a study of "Iran's relationship with Bahrain's Shi'a after the Arab Uprisings."

Arrest

Moore-Gilbert was arrested and imprisoned in October of 2018. She reportedly had begun taking a course in the Iranian holy city of Qom in 2018. Her name was not made public until September of 2019 due to her family's preference to seek her release quietly, through diplomatic channels, and their fear that naming her could damage her chances of being released.

Treatment in Prison

The regime is holding Moore-Gilbert in Tehran's notoriously brutal Evin Prison—reportedly in Ward 2-A, which is controlled by the intelligence wing of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). She is reportedly being held in solitary confinement, with the lights always on. Her family was not permitted to visit her, but Australian consular officials were allowed to meet with her. She also reportedly was denied access to legal counsel, and has gone on several hunger strikes to protest her treatment by the prison authorities. Iranian law only permits the use of solitary confinement during interrogation and investigation, but Moore-Gilbert reportedly remains isolated long after her conviction.

Human rights activist and former Evin Prison inmate Reza Khandan wrote on Facebook in May of 2020 that Moore-Gilbert had tried to kill herself on multiple occasions, but the imprisoned academic's family denied that assertion.

In letters smuggled out of prison, Moore-Gilbert affirmed her innocence, affirming that she is not and never has been a spy, and rejected offers from the Iranian regime to commit espionage on behalf of Tehran. She also wrote that that her health "has deteriorated significantly" and she had been taken to a hospital twice and to Evin's infirmary six times. "I think I am in the midst of a serious psychological problem," she said, adding that "I can no longer stand the pressures of living in this extremely restrictive detention ward anymore. My situation here is even more difficult due to the ban on having any phone calls with my family. I worry a lot about their reactions to my verdict but I cannot talk to them. This is really inhumane."

Charges, Trial, and Sentencing

CNN reported on September 18, 2019, that a source told them Moore-Gilbert had been tried and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment for espionage. Iran's foreign ministry and judiciary gave conflicting statements about the matter, with the former confirming that Moore-Gilbert had been sentenced in 2018 for espionage, but the latter claiming she was "spying for another country" but has yet to be tried.

International Outcry

Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne has stated that she has brought up the cases of Moore-Gilbert and other Australian hostages in Iran "many times" with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

On September 15, 2019, Rudy Giuliani, former mayor of New York and current (as of October of 2019) lawyer for U.S. President Donald Trump, tweeted his outrage at the Iranian regime's treatment of Moore-Gilbert, writing, "Dr Kylie Moore-Gilbert, the third foreign national revealed this week to be imprisoned in Iran. Arrested, charged, and convicted for undisclosed actions. Sentenced to 10 YEARS without any public record of a trial! These are typical actions of the Ayatollah's #REIGN OF TERROR!" An Amnesty International official has expressed concern that the authorities may have engaged in "serious human rights violations" against the detained Australians, "including denial of access to a lawyer and even torture or other ill-treatment."

Meimanat Hosseini-Chavoshi

Australian-Iranian Academic

Biography

Meimanat Hosseini-Chavoshi is an Australian-Iranian citizen and demographer who is employed as an academic at the University of Melbourne's School of Population and Global Health. She has written about the Iranian government's population-control policies.

Arrest

Hosseini-Chavoshi was arrested in Tehran on her way to leave Iran in December of 2018 after going on a study tour in the country and speaking at a conference on aging populations after being invited to do so by the labor and social-welfare ministry.

Charges

The authorities charged Hosseini-Chavoshi with trying to "infiltrate" Iranian institutions in order to impede the government's efforts to increase the country's birth rate.

International Outcry

In December of 2018, a Human Rights Watch researcher published an analysis of Hosseini-Chavoshi's case and the broader problem of detention of dual nationals and foreign nationals in Iran. She stated that "Iranian authorities should ensure the rights of these detainees and grant them fair trials to end this grave misjustice."

Additionally, the Committee of Concerned Scientists wrote to Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani, then the head of Iran's judiciary, in December of 2018, urging that she "be released immediately and unconditionally" and that she and a fellow family-planning scholar whom had been brought in questioning be allowed "to continue their academic work without harassment or intimidation." The Middle East Studies Association's Committee on Academic Freedom also wrote to Larijani and to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as well, urging them to release Hosseini-Chavoshi and other imprisoned scholars immediately and "ensure their safe return to their countries of residence and to their families."

Release and Possible Exit Ban

Hosseini-Chavoshi's lawyer announced in January of 2019 that she had been released. Iranian state television later reported that the charges against her were dismissed. However, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation reported in October of 2019 that she had not been heard from since her release and that the regime may be preventing her from leaving Iran.

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe

British-Iranian Project Manager at the Charity Thomson Reuters Foundation

Biography

Nazanin Zaghari Ratcliffe is a British-Iranian project manager at Thomson Reuters Foundation, a charity organization promoting socio-economic progress, independent journalism, and the rule of law.

Arrest

Nazanin was detained on April 3, 2016, at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Airport by officials believed to belong to Iran's Revolutionary Guards. She had traveled to Iran on March 17, 2016, to visit her family during the Persian New Year holiday. She was detained as she was about to return to the U.K., along with her toddler daughter, Gabriella.

Before being taken into custody, Nazanin was allowed to leave Gabriella in the care of her parents, who had accompanied her to the airport. The authorities confiscated Gabriella's British passport initially, but it was eventually returned, and Gabriella left Iran for the U.K. in October of 2019.

Treatment in Prison

Nazanin was taken to an undisclosed detention center in Kerman in southern Iran for interrogation and was held in solitary confinement for 45 days. Her family paid bail to keep her from being returned to solitary. On June 5, 2016, Nazanin was transferred from Kerman Prison to a ward controlled by the intelligence organization of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in Evin Prison. While in Evin, Nazanin briefly shared a cell with Homa Hoodfar, a Canadian-Iranian professor who was arrested in June of 2016 and released on September 26, 2016.

Since her arrest, Nazanin has been denied the right to access a lawyer and is feared to have been coerced into making "confessions." She was allowed a meeting with her parents and daughter for the first time on May 11, 2016, in a hotel room in Kerman. The meeting, which lasted over two hours, took place in the presence of security agents. According to her husband, Richard, "When she met [her family] at that hotel, she wasn't able to stand up she was so weak. She couldn't walk without getting a blackout. She wasn't able to pick up her baby, and our baby had to be put on her lap, she was so weak." Nazanin has been permitted to make several brief phone calls to family members in Iran and, intermittently, to her husband outside the country, and those were only to tell him she had stood trial and been sentenced to five years in prison. Authorities halted the phone calls to her family in Iran on June 5, 2016. In July 2016, her husband reported that she had lost weight, seen her hair fall out, and was virtually unable to walk.

In October 2016, her husband Richard told Amnesty International that his wife's health had sharply deteriorated and that she was even contemplating suicide. She was suffering from heart palpitations in addition to pain in her hands, arms, and shoulders, and blurred vision. On November 13, 2016, Nazanin began a hunger strike to express her despair over the prospect of never being released.

On November 25, 2016, Nazanin told her family that IRGC officials had pressured her to choose between them moving their two-year-old daughter Gabriella into Section 2A of Evin Prison with her for up to three days a week, or Nazanin signing a document to say that she does not want "the right to be with her young daughter."

On August 23, 2018, Nazanin was granted a three-day furlough to see her daughter and other family members in Iran, but her request for an extension was denied and she returned to prison on August 26. In January of 2019, the British press reported that the IRGC had unsuccessfully tried to recruit Nazanin as a spy in exchange for her release. The Guards wanted her to spy on the U.K. Department for International Development and the Small Media Foundation, which describes itself as a "human rights research lab and information design studio."

Nazanin went on a hunger strike in January of 2019 to protest her lack of medical care for multiple health problems, including neck pain, lumps in her breasts, and numbness in her arms and legs. She ended the strike when the prison authorities agreed to give her medical treatment.

Nazanin and her husband launched a joint hunger strike in June of 2019 seeking her unconditional release. The strike lasted 15 days, and Richard Ratcliffe spent it outside the Iranian embassy in London. In July of 2019, Nazanin was moved to a hospital psychiatric ward. Her husband said she was put in de facto solitary confinement and chained to her bed for six days, after which the authorities gave in and transferred her back to prison.

Nazanin issued an unprecedented open letter in October of 2019. She pleaded for her release and claimed that "My child and I are the playthings of politicians, inside and outside our homeland, who have used us as tools to try to achieve their own political goals."

Nazanin's family and she herself expressed concern in February of 2020 that Nazanin had contracted the highly dangerous novel coronavirus, COVID-19. "I feel very bad in fact," she said. "It is a strange cold. Not like usual. I know the kinds of cold I normally have, how my body reacts. This is different. I am just as bad as I was. I often get better after three days. But with this there is no improvement. I haven't got one bit better." She added that she had had a very sore throat and intermittent fever, as well as breathing difficulties and general pains and fatigue, and was not tested for the virus. A spokesman for Iran's judiciary claimed that she was healthy and not suffering from COVID-19.

Trial and Sentencing

On April 27, 2016, the family was told that Nazanin was being held for "reasons related to national security," without elaborating on further details and that she would likely be held for another two or three months until the completion of an investigation. Nazanin was subsequently accused of partaking in a plot to overthrow the Iranian government.

On June 9, 2016, Richard Ratcliffe said Nazanin telephoned her family in Iran informing them that she had been told she was going to be released, "and then, after she did that, someone called her parents and said: 'there has been a mistake, we are changing things, and she is being transferred.'"

On June 15, the IRGC in the Kerman Province accused Zaghari-Ratcliffe of being a "top operative in a foreign network" who was participating in a "plot for the soft overthrow of the Islamic Republic." An official IRGC statement in Iranian media accused Nazanin of attempting to overthrow the Islamic Republic as "one of the chief members of networks of adversary institutions who — with the direction and support of foreign media and espionage services — has committed her criminal acts over the past few years."

On August 14, 2016, Nazanin faced a secret trial before the Revolutionary Court. On September 9, 2016, she was sentenced to five years in prison for undisclosed crimes. Nazanin appealed the sentence, but according to Richard Ratcliffe an Iranian Revolutionary Court dismissed her appeal in a secret session on January 4, 2017, though the decision was only announced on January 22, 2017.

During the appeal hearing, two new accusations were raised against Nazanin. These charges included the claim that she was knowingly married to a British spy, and that she acted as the head of recruitment for BBC Farsi at the time of its founding in 2009. Nazanin never worked for BBC Farsi and she had been to Iran on holiday many times without a problem since she left her role as Project Assistant for BBC Media Action in 2010.

In April of 2017, the Supreme Court rejected Nazanin's final appeal, leaving her five-year prison sentence in place.

In October of 2017, Tehran's prosecutor general said Nazanin was imprisoned for directing "a BBC Persian online journalism course which was aimed at recruiting and training people to spread propaganda against Iran." In December of 2017, Iranian state television said Nazanin was "found guilty of spying and spreading propaganda against the Islamic Republic." Specifically, Nazanin allegedly ran "training courses for recruits at the BBC World Service Trust and the ZigZag Academy," the latter of which engaged in "training and recruitment of human resources for the launch of BBC Persian Service and deployment of undercover reporters in Iran to gather intelligence." Nazanin purportedly "identified potential Iranian recruits and invited them to attend the training courses, received and reviewed their resumes, managed financial affairs related to the courses in Malaysia and India, picked trainers, assessed the performance of the participants and managed the ZigZag Academy's websites."

Also in October of 2017, Nazanin's family disclosed that at a hearing at Evin Prison, she was told that she was facing new charges, including "joining and receiving money from organizations working to overthrow the Islamic Republic, and attending a demonstration outside the Iranian Embassy in London." The additional charges disqualified her from applying for early release and could tack on 16 more years in prison to her sentence.

A judge told Nazanin in July of 2018 that she would remain in prison until the British government repaid Iran a debt of almost $400 million for an unfulfilled military sale in the 1970s, implicitly reaffirming that the regime was holding Nazanin hostage as leverage to extract concessions from the U.K. In September of 2019, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said that in 2016, the British government offered to release those funds to Iran in exchange for Nazanin's release, but British Foreign Minister Jeremy Hunt retracted the offer upon taking office in 2018.

Temporary Release

As the novel coronavirus ravaged Iran in the spring of 2020, and particularly endangered inmates living in the appalling conditions of the Iranian prison system, the regime temporarily released Nazanin and tens of thousands of other prisoners. She left Evin Prison on a brief medical furlough on March 17, 2020, and placed under de facto house arrest. She is forced to wear an ankle monitor—for which her family had to pay a fee—and may not move more than 300 meters (less than one-fifth of a mile) from her parents' home. (Reportedly, she is the only temporarily released political prisoner required to wear one.)

Her furlough originally was to end on April 4, but on May 20, Zaghari-Ratcliffe's family tweeted that her medical furlough had essentially been extended indefinitely—until the regime decides whether to grant her request for clemency.

International Outcry

Since going public with the news of Nazanin's arrest, her husband, Richard, has relentlessly campaigned for her freedom. He launched a petition calling for her release that has been signed by more than three million people as of March 2020.

A report from the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) strongly condemned the imprisonment of Nazanin. On October 24, 2016, petitions were delivered to the U.K. Foreign Office with a letter co-signed by 117 Members of Parliament and 24 Members of the House of Lords calling for the release of Nazanin along with two other British-Iranian citizens. The petition, signed by more than 73,000 supporters, was sponsored by Amnesty International.

The United Kingdom's Foreign Office granted Nazanin diplomatic protection in 2019, which Iran has rejected. This move has raised the matter beyond a consular dispute and into a full bilateral legal dispute between Iran and Britain.

When the regime granted Nazanin a two-week medical furlough in March of 2020, British Foreign Minister Dominic Raab said that he was "relieved," and urged the regime to make sure she received needed and now to release all UK dual nationals arbitrarily detained in Iran, and enable them to return to their families in the UK."

Ruhollah Zam
Activist and Journalist, French Resident and Iranian National

Biography

Ruhollah Zam is an Iranian activist and former journalist who lived in exile with refugee status in France and openly sought the overthrow of the Islamic Republic. He ran Telegram channels used to spread information to Iranians protesting the regime and encourages viewers to join demonstrations. Zam's channels—particularly AmadNews—disseminated times and places of upcoming rallies to its subscribers, who numbered more than a million. He also published controversial materials undermining the regime, including documents revealing government corruption and malfeasance.

Zam was born in Tehran in 1973. He said he left Iran after being jailed in Tehran's notoriously brutal Evin Prison after the controversial 2009 presidential election and accused of working with foreign intelligence agencies. His father is a cleric who served in the Iranian government in the 1980s and has condemned his son's work. Zam has said that some of his relatives in Iran have been detained for months in order to compel him to shut down his Telegram channel and return to Iran.

Arrest

In mid-October of 2019, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) announced that it had arrested Zam after he was "guided into the country" via a "complicated intelligence operation," adding that Zam had "stepped into intelligence trap of the Guards some two years ago." The IRGC posted news of Zam's arrest on his Telegram channel, as well as a photo of Zam in captivity, with the caption "This is just the beginning."

The IRGC claimed Zam was being guided and safeguarded by American, Israeli, and French intelligence agencies, and called him "one of the main people of the enemy's media network and psychological warfare." A senior IRGC general said, "Zam was a key figure of intelligence services for throwing the country into disarray… and driving a wedge between the Iranian people and government."

The *Times of London* reported that a female Iranian intelligence agent persuaded him to go to Iraq, where he was abducted and brought back to Iran. According to Radio Farda, the French newspaper *Le Figaro* said that it had sources who said Zam was lured to Iraq with a promise of meeting leading Shiite Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. Iranian exiles and experts in Paris have theorized that French intelligence at least tacitly agreed to the IRGC operation in order to get Iran to release two imprisoned French academics.

According to the *Financial Times*, Zam's wife, Mahsa Razani, said her husband was traveling to Iraq "for a business meeting and knew and trusted the woman in question." A friend of Zam's told Iranian media that he was keen to raise money for a television channel, adding that Shirin Najafi, an administrator at Amadnews, showed him 15 million in euros-in €500-euro notes on her bed and told him to come to Iraq to take the money personally to Paris. The friend claimed that the Iranian regime had gotten her to cooperate with them against Zam. Najafi, now reportedly in hiding, denies asking Zam to come to Iraq, and told the Iran International satellite channel that she asked Zam not to go, but he insisted.

On October 17, 2019, Iranian state-run television reported that IRGC agents arrested Zam in Iraqi Kurdistan, near the border with Iran. Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government denied that Zam had ever been in Iraqi Kurdistan. The IRGC has not disclosed where it arrested Zam, but an IRGC official revealed that the Guards had captured him with the cooperation of a foreign intelligence service. After Zam's arrest, regime hardliners accused officials in President Hassan Rouhani's administration of leaking information to AmadNews, and one member of parliament claimed that several administration officials had been arrested for cooperating with Zam's website.

On October 23, 2019, an IRGC spokesperson claimed that the Guards had "already captured many of [Zam's] contacts inside the country." Media and others tied to the IRGC have said that finding Zam's network of sources is more important than capturing the activist himself.

Treatment in Prison

The regime forced Zam to confess on Iranian television to engaging in "counter-revolutionary" actions at the direction of France. He apologized to the Islamic Republic, said he regretted "what has happened in the past three or four years," and stated that he was "wrong" to trust foreign governments like France's, and "especially governments that show they do not have good relations with the Islamic Republic," including the United States, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

Trial

Zam's trial began on February 10, 2020, in Tehran's Revolutionary Court. It is presided over by Judge Abolqassem Salavati, who is nicknamed "the hanging judge" or "the judge of death" for imposing harsh sentences, including capital punishment, in political cases. Zam was reportedly charged with either 15 or 17 counts, including "sowing corruption on earth" insulting "the sanctity of Islam," and "conspiring with

the US Government against the Islamic Republic of Iran"—all of which carry the death penalty—as well as having "committed offences against the country's internal and external security," "complicity in provoking and luring people into war and slaughter," "espionage for the French intelligence service," "spying for Israeli intelligence services via the intelligence services of one of the countries in the region," "establishment and administration of the Amad News channel and the Voice of People," and "insulting Ruhollah Khomeini and Ali Khamenei."

At trial in February, Zam reportedly contested the claim that the U.S. is an "enemy state." He also admitted to meeting someone from the U.S. National Security Agency, but only regarding a visa application. At another trial session in May, a prosecutor accused Ruhollah Zam of links to espionage activities and claimed Zam was not a member of the press. Zam disputed those claims, asserting that he operated as a journalist and broadcaster.

International Outcry

Zam's wife, Mahsa Razani, who resides in France, told the BBC Persian Service that "My husband was abducted. I saw [reports] of his arrest on Iranian television and could not believe it until I saw the video when I realised he was kidnapped."

The French foreign ministry stated, "We reiterate our commitment to upholding the rule of law and in particular, the freedom of expression and the right of asylum, and therefore strongly confirm [sic; presumably "condemn" was intended] Ruhollah Zam's arrest."

Sabri Hassanpour
Dual Iranian-Dutch National, Political Activist

Biography

Hassanpour is a Dutch-Iranian dual national and outspoken critic of the Iranian regime who serves as the executive director and host of the Persian-language online network "Simay-e Rahayi" (Vision of Liberation). He is also reportedly a member of the National Iranian Congress to Save Iran, which aims to establish a shadow government and parliament in exile for Iranians."

Arrest

Hassanpour was arrested in Iran on April 21, 2016. Hassanpour, who currently is a resident and citizen of the Netherlands, had reportedly traveled to Iran to visit relatives. Some sources close to him claim "he was abducted from Turkey during a meeting with family and transferred to Iran."

Treatment in Prison

Hassanpour was reportedly transferred to Evin Prison's clinic following a heart attack on November 15, 2016. Prison officials reportedly refused requests by Hassanpour for needed open-heart surgery. A source close to Hassanpour said that he "suffers from asthma and heart disease [and] is in a bad health condition due to constant insults and mistreatment…" In addition, Hassanpour's wife was unable to follow up on his case because she lives in the Netherlands and feared that if she travelled to Iran, she might also have been arrested.

Charges, Trial, and Sentencing

Hassanpour was put on trial by Iran's Revolutionary Court on November 12, 2016, for "propaganda against the state and acting against national security." Presiding Judge Abolghasem Salvati reportedly told Hassanpour he would receive a "heavy verdict" for signing a letter in support of prisoners on hunger strike. Hassanpour started a hunger strike—including refusing to take his medication—in protest on May 9, 2017. He was released and permitted to return to the Netherlands in May of 2018.

Saeed Malekpour

Iranian National and Canadian Permanent Resident Who Escaped from Imprisonment for Life

Biography

In 2004, Saeed Malekpour emigrated from Iran to Canada with his wife Fatima Eftekhari so she could continue her studies. They both attended the University of Victoria, where Fatima earned her PhD and Saeed followed in her footsteps. Saeed had earned a degree in mechanical engineering from Sharif University of Tehran and hoped that a Canadian degree would help him earn a better job. Before his move to Canada, Saeed worked for Iran Khodro, one of the country's largest automakers.

By the fall of 2008, Fatima was enrolled in a post-doctoral degree at the University of Toronto and preparing for their move to a new home in Richmond Hill. Saeed had been working as a freelance web designer and programmer. He created a program to improve the uploading of photos to websites. At the time of his arrest, Malekpour was a Canadian permanent resident, with protection under Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. He was on a path to receiving Canadian citizenship and did not participate in Iranian politics.

Arrest

Malekpour was arrested on October 4, 2008, while visiting his dying father in Iran. Malekpour was "snatched from a Tehran street in broad daylight and stuffed into the back of a car. He was blindfolded, beaten, and then taken to a detention center." In March 2010, Malekpour wrote a letter about his arrest: "[A] few agents physically beat me severely and verbally abused me, while I remained handcuffed and blindfolded. They forced me to sign a few forms, but I was not able to read the contents." According to Amnesty International, Malekpour's arrest and sentencing were part of a larger operation

called *Gerdab* (Whirlpool) which was conducted by the Cyber Crimes Unit of the Revolutionary Guards in 2008 and sought to crack down on on-line activities deemed "immoral" or "un-Islamic."

Treatment in Prison

At Iran's notoriously brutal Evin Prison, Malekpour was tortured physically and psychologically into confessing to "running a network of porn sites, being a pedophile and a pervert." He was held in solitary confinement from his arrest until August 16, 2009, during which time he was denied contact with his family or legal counsel. Malekpour was again transferred to solitary confinement on December 21, 2009, and remained there until February 8, 2010. He told journalists after his escape that he had been thrown into solitary two more times, once for two days and one for 195.

Prison guards dislocated Malekpour's jaw in January 2009 when they beat him and kicked him in the face. Malekpour made a televised "confession" in 2009 that he later retracted in a letter sent from inside prison. Malekpour wrote, "A large portion of my confession was extracted under pressure, physical and psychological torture, threats to myself and my family, and false promises of immediate release upon giving a false confession to whatever the interrogators dictated ... Such mistreatment was aimed at forcing me to write what the interrogators were dictating, and to compel me to play a role in front of the camera based on their scenarios."

Malekpour "suffered severe injuries due to beatings, and serious illnesses while in prison, including kidney problems and rheumatism, none of which have been properly treated." He detailed the torture he endured in his March 2010 letter: "Most of the time, the torture was performed by a group. While I remained blindfolded and handcuffed, several individuals armed with cables, batons, and their fists struck and punched me. At times, they would flog my head and neck… Sometimes, they used extremely painful electrical shocks that would paralyse me temporarily… Once, in October 2008, the interrogators stripped me while I was blindfolded and threatened to rape me with a water bottle."

In addition to describing the physical torture in his letter, Malekpour reported that he found the psychological torture he experienced even worse. He writes: "The physical torture was nothing compared to the psychological torments. I endured long solitary confinement without phone calls or the possibility of visiting my loved ones, constant threats to arrest and torture my wife and family if I did not co-operate, threats to kill me. They also gave me false news that my wife had been arrested. My mental health was severely threatened. I had no access to any books or journals in the solitary cells, and at times, I would not speak to anybody for days."

After the authorities commuted Malekpour's second death sentence, he was moved into the prison's general population, but his health paid the price for years of physical and emotional abuse. He suffered a heart attack and was taken to the hospital, where he was shacked to his bed and kept under permanent guard.

Sentencing and Conviction

Malekpour's trial began on November 29, 2009, over a year after his arrest. He was represented by a lawyer that was not permitted to meet with him until a few minutes before the trial started. During the

trial, the court dismissed Malekpour's allegations of torture and mistreatment as lies. In December 2010, he was sentenced to death, convicted of "designing and moderating adult content websites," "agitation against the regime," and "insulting the sanctity of Islam." At the same time, he was sentenced to seven and a half years' imprisonment on charges of "insulting the Leader," "insulting the President," "insulting Islamic sanctities," and "spreading propaganda against the system." There was no evidence against Saeed other than the forced confession extracted under torture.

The death sentence was rescinded by the Iranian Supreme Court in June 2011 and the case was transferred to a lower court for further investigation. Following a retrial, in October 2011 Saeed was again sentenced to death in November 2011 by a branch of the Revolutionary Court. In January 2012, this second death sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court. After international condemnation, Malekpour's death sentence was subsequently commuted to a life imprisonment. In August 2013, his lawyer announced that the death sentence had been reduced by Iran's Amnesty and Clemency Commission because Malekpour had "repented for his actions." Malekpour then began serving a life sentence in Evin Prison.

International Outcry

In 2011, Canada's foreign ministry issued a statement expressing concern over the fate of Malekpour as a Canadian of dual nationality. In 2012 the Canadian House of Commons took an urgent and unanimous stance expressing deep concern for Malekpour's safety and demanding that Iran be held accountable for his treatment and release Malekpour and other unjustly detained prisoners.

In October 2016, the international digital rights NGO Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) published a statement and online action urging Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to fight for Malekpour's release. His case has also been pursued by Amnesty International and other prominent human rights organizations.

Escape

In the summer of 2019, the Iranian authorities granted Malekpour a furlough. He then escaped the country via a third country and returned to Canada.

UNITED AGAINST NUCLEAR IRAN

Recently Released

Jolie King and Mark Firkin
British-Australian Travelers

Biographies

Jolie King, a British-Australian national, and her Australian boyfriend, Mark Firkin, visited Iran in 2019 as part of their plan to travel the globe by car from their home in Australia to London and blog about their trip. King is a building designer and Firkin is a construction manager.

Arrest

King and Firkin were arrested in Iran in June of 2019, reportedly after they flew a drone without a permit in an area near Iranian military installations.

Treatment in Prison

King was reportedly held in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison, where, according to a fellow prisoner's husband, she spent weeks in solitary confinement. Firkin's whereabouts during his detention were not disclosed.

Release

Australia's foreign minister announced on October 5, 2019, that, after extended conversations between her and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, King and Firkin had been released, the charges against them were dropped, and they had returned to Australia. Simultaneously, the Australian attorney general publicly disclosed that it would not extradite to the United States an Iranian student accused of exporting U.S.-origin military radar equipment to Iran.

UNITED AGAINST NUCLEAR IRAN

Kamal Foroughi
British-Iranian Consultant

Biography

Kamal Foroughi is an elderly British-Iranian who worked in Tehran as a consultant for the Malaysian oil-and-gas firm Petronas. He was born on September 3, 1939. His work for Petronas included facilitating meetings with senior Iranian oil-and-gas officials and arranging Iranian government-funded scholarships for Iranians to study in Malaysia.

Arrest

Foroughi's family claims plainclothes officers arrested him in Tehran in May of 2011 without producing a warrant.

Treatment in Prison

Foroughi was held in Tehran's notoriously brutal Evin Prison, and reportedly spent 18 months in solitary confinement. Because Iran does not recognize dual nationality, the regime did not let British diplomats meet with him. As of 2015, the authorities also did not permit Foroughi's relatives to meet with him in prison, though they were allowed to speak by phone.

Foroughi's family repeatedly expressed concern about his access to medical care, stating that he did not undergo any medical tests until 2015. They said in 2016 that he was awaiting an operation for cataracts in both eyes. In 2017, Foroughi's family claimed that the authorities were denying them and Foroughi access to his medical test results.

Charges, Trial, and Sentencing

Foroughi was convicted in 2013 of espionage and possessing alcohol and sentenced to a combined eight years in prison. His family claimed the judiciary did not provide them any supporting evidence of those charges. Foroughi was tried before Tehran Revolutionary Court Judge Abolqassem Salavati, who is nicknamed "the hanging judge" or "the judge of death" for imposing harsh sentences, including capital punishment, in political cases.

Twice, the authorities raised hopes that Foroughi would be released, only to dash them. In July of 2016, Foroughi's son publicly announced that the Iranian judiciary had told the prisoner's lawyer that he would be freed within a week, but no release occurred. In 2017, Foroughi was granted brief medical leave from prison but a promised extended furlough was later denied.

International Outcry

Kamal Foroughi's son, Kamran, ran a campaign for his father's release, including a Change.org petition with over 230,000 signatures. 219 British MPs and 42 members of the House of Lords signed a 2007 letter to then–Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson asking him to seek the release of Foroughi and two other British nationals held hostage by Iran.

The British Foreign Office said in 2015 that it provided help to the Foroughi family, was worried about Foroughi's health, and had brought it up repeatedly with the Iranian government at the highest levels, pressuring them to provide him with access to regular health care and an attorney, and ultimately to release him on the grounds of his poor health.

European Union then-High Representative Federica Mogherini stated in 2017 that she "is aware of the imprisonment of both Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe [another British national] and Kamal Foroughi and their cases remain of utmost concern to the EU. The EU has raised their cases on a number of occasions with the Iranian authorities. The EU has asked for their release on humanitarian grounds and underlined the need to provide adequate medical care during their detention. The EU will continue to closely follow the cases and use every opportunity to raise them…"

Amnesty International called for Foroughi to receive specialized medical care outside prison and to be released outright. The organization noted that "Foroughi's treatment appears to be part of a wider pattern whereby the Iranian authorities have brought spurious national security-related charges against dual-nationals and other individuals with foreign connections."

Release

In late 2018, the Iranian regime released Foroughi, but he had to remain in Iran until his Iranian passport was renewed, which did not happen until February of 2020. Foroughi remained in Iran several weeks more because most flights were full because of the coronavirus pandemic and the Iranian new year. In March 2020, Foroughi left Iran and returned to his family in London. His son said that Foroughi "seem[ed physically healthy."

Foroughi was imprisoned by the Iranian regime for over seven years and held in Iran against his will for almost nine years in total.

UNITED AGAINST NUCLEAR IRAN

Nizar Zakka
Information Technology Expert and Advocate of Internet Freedom

Arrest

Nizar Zakka is a Lebanese national and permanent U.S. resident who was detained in Iran on September 18, 2015 and released on June 10, 2019. He is an information and communications technology expert and secretary-general of the Arab information and communications technology organization IJMA3. He holds both a Bachelor's and Master's degree in computer science from the University of Texas at Austin. Zakka has led development projects for corporations such as Cisco and Microsoft, and he has also done contract work for the U.S. State Department. Zakka traveled to Tehran at the invitation of the Iranian government—specifically by Iran's then-Vice President for Women and Family Affairs Shahindokht Molaverdi, an ally of President Hassan Rouhani—on September 15, 2015 to participate in the second International Conference and Exhibition on Women in Sustainable Development, held between September 15 and 18.

Zakka was last seen on September 18 leaving his hotel in a taxi to the airport to fly to Beirut, but he never boarded his flight. On October 31, 2015, the Beirut-based *Daily Star* reported that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) was holding Zakka. Zakka was reportedly transferred to Ward 2-A of Evin Prison, which is used to hold political prisoners and is under control of the IRGC.

Treatment in Prison

Iranian authorities imprisoned Zakka for over 1,350 days, where he was repeatedly interrogated about his ICT work and asked if he was a spy, which he denied. He was forced under pressure to give his email address and password to his interrogators. Zakka was not allowed to have any contact with his family for several months after his arrest. In protest of the authorities' refusal to allow him access to his family, he went on hunger strike between March 13 and April 4, 2016, and was later given intermittent access to his family through telephone calls and visits.

While in prison, Zakka had several health conditions, including severe back pain and blood in his stool. His family said that he lost a significant amount of weight and became very weak. Despite this, the authorities denied him proper medical care, including his medication. He launched a second week-long hunger strike in August 2016 to protest the placement of four additional prisoners in his cell, including one who claimed to be a member of the Islamic State (ISIS). According to his lawyer, Nizar was subject to psychological torture and physical strains and his family members have also been intimidated.

Trial and Sentence

On November 3, 2015, Iranian state broadcaster IRIB reported that Zakka was in the custody of authorities on suspicion of being an American spy. IRIB described him as a "treasure trove" because of

"connections with intelligence and military bodies in the United States." As evidence, Iranian state TV displayed a photo of Zakka in army-style fatigues, which Zakka's family said was from a homecoming parade he participated in as an alumnus of the American military high school he attended in Georgia. In January 2016 Zakka was allowed to appoint a lawyer, but he was not allowed to meet with him in private until April 2016. Up until this point, he was not made aware of the charges against him. On April 4, 2016, he learned from his lawyer that his charges included "collaborating with hostile governments," presumably the U.S. government.

On August 22, 2016, Nizar Zakka was taken before Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran for his first trial session. This was followed by a 30-minute session on August 30 when he was told that his trial had concluded and that he would receive the verdict within 12 days. Nizar Zakka's lawyer was denied full access to his case file to prepare his defense and was only allowed limited opportunities to communicate with his client before the trial. On September 20, 2016, Zakka's lawyer announced that he had been sentenced to 10 years in prison and a $4.2 million fine for collaborating against the state.

On September 24, 2016, Nizar's brother Ziad responded to his sentencing: "This trial was a total mockery of Justice; Nazir was sentenced after only two court sessions and Iran refused to permit the attendance of the Lebanese consul." The family is now asking for a retrial in front of an international body such as Amnesty International, in the presence of a legal representative of the Lebanese Republic. Nizar, said through his attorney on October 26, 2016, that Iranian officials in April told him it would take as much as $2 billion to ensure his release from captivity. In September, Iranian officials lowered that amount to $4 million and told him that he was spared the death penalty but would remain in prison for ten years until the payments are made.

Release

In June 2019, reports surfaced that Iran would hand Zakka over to Lebanese officials. Dueling accounts of Zakka's release then began to leak. Lebanese media claimed that Zakka had been pardoned at the request of President Michel Aoun, who is a political ally of Iran's terror proxy Hezbollah. However, the Iranian press alleged that Zakka had been freed only because of the intervention of Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah. When Iranian officials finally released Zakka on June 10, General Abbas Ibrahim, the head of Lebanon's General Security Directorate, was in Tehran to oversee the transfer.

Roland Marchal
French Academic

Biography

Roland Marchal is a French sociologist employed by the university SciencesPo in Paris. Marchal's research focused on sub-Saharan Africa, particularly civil wars and state formation in that region. He formerly served as chief editor of the French academic journal *Politique Africaine*. He holds degrees from the Ecole des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales and the University of Paris VI.

Arrest

Marchal flew to Tehran in June of 2019 to spend the Eid holiday with his colleague and longtime companion, Faribah Adelkhah, but he was arrested upon arriving in Tehran. Adelkhah, a French-Iranian dual national, was also arrested.

Treatment in Prison

Marchal was held, and Adelkhah remains, in Tehran's notoriously brutal Evin Prison. Adelkhah, who holds both Iranian and French citizenship, has not been allowed to meet with French consular officials because Iran does not recognize her dual nationality. Marchal was permitted to meet with the French officials several times, as well as with an attorney.

Roland's health reportedly deteriorated in prison. In December of 2019, Adelkhah started a 49-day hunger strike to demand that the regime release Marchal and her.

In early February of 2020, Marchal and Adelkhah petitioned for permission to marry so that they could meet with each other in prison. No judgment on their petition was made public.

Charges and Trial

The regime held Marchal and Adelkhah for months without making criminal charges public. Finally, it disclosed that he would be tried for "collusion to endanger national security," while she would be tried for both that charge and "propaganda against the political system of the Islamic Republic."
Their trial commenced on March 3, 2020, though only Adelkhah appeared, and further proceedings were then postponed indefinitely without explanation. The reason for Marchal's absence was not disclosed.

International Outcry

Marchal's detention was initially not made public at the request of his family and the French Foreign Ministry, the latter of whom reportedly did not want the matter to become a reason for a "nationalist flare-up" in Iran. The academic's imprisonment was reported on for the first time by the French

newspaper *Le Figaro* in October 2019. At that time, the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE) said it was "mobilised to obtain his release" and "urge[d] the Iranian authorities to be transparent and act without delay to put an end to this unacceptable situation."

In December of 2019, the French government summoned Iran's ambassador and demanded again that Marchal and Adelkhah be released and that French consular officials be allowed to meet with them. France's foreign minister reiterated those demands to his Iranian counterpart in February of 2020. SciencesPo has claimed that it has taken several steps to help Marchal and Adelkhah, working closely with the MEAE and the French National Centre for Scientific Research. The university mentioned that it had made sure that the two hostages had a very experienced attorney who is on the Iranian regime's approved list.

After the couple's trial began on March 3, their Paris-based support group condemned the hearing as a "masquerade of justice" and accused the regime of "deliberately putting in danger the lives of our two colleagues—already weakened—by keeping them in an overcrowded jail while the country is hit by a serious coronavirus epidemic whose scale is being played down and which is not under control."

Release

Iran freed Marchal on March 20, 2020, in exchange for France simultaneously releasing Jalal Rohollahnejad, an Iranian accused of violating U.S. sanctions laws. Marchal returned to France the next day.

The Iranian government had recently released 85,000 prisoners temporarily to limit infections as a coronavirus epidemic ravaged the country. The day before Marchal's release, the regime announced that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei would grant amnesty to 10,000 prisoners, including an unstated amount of political ones.

The regime continues to hold Adelkhah hostage in Evin Prison. On May 16, 2020, Adelkhah was sentenced to five years in prison for the aforementioned "collusion" charge and one year for the "propaganda" charge. French President Emmanuel Macron has urged Tehran to also free her.

The U.S. sought to prosecute Rohollahnejad for trying to illegally export military-use American technology to Iran on behalf of a company allegedly linked to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Earlier in March, the highest court in France approved his extradition to the States. The U.S. State Department slammed France for its "unilateral decision" to release Rohollahnejad, stating, "It is regrettable in this instance that France failed to uphold its treaty obligations and prevented justice from being pursued." Rohollahnejad went back to Iran after his release.

UNITED AGAINST NUCLEAR IRAN

Roya Saberi Negad Nobakht
British-Iranian Dual National Arrested for Facebook Comments

Arrest

Nobakht was arrested by the cybercrime intelligence unit of the Revolutionary Guards in October 2013 while visiting friends in the city of Shiraz, Iran. She traveled to Tehran to see family that month, and about two weeks into the trip, she flew to Shiraz to visit a friend and was arrested at the airport. She was then taken back to Tehran and charged with "gathering and participation with intent to commit crimes against national security" and "insulting Islamic sanctities." Her husband said his wife's arrest was over comments she had made on a Facebook group about the Iranian government being "too Islamic" and that she had only been charged after a confession was extracted from her "under duress."

Biography

Roya Saberi Negad Nobakht moved to Stockport, Manchester, England, to join her husband, Daryoush Taghipoor, in 2007. Nobakht and her husband are naturalized British citizens.

Treatment in Prison

Nobakht was taken to Tehran's notoriously brutal Evin Prison, where she was reportedly subjected to "physical and psychological torture, insults and humiliation" in jail. She was moved to Shahre Rey Prison, an all-female jail with "unspeakably inhuman" conditions where inmates are often subject to beatings by guards. Nobakht has also been denied access to medication, held in solitary confinement, and forced to stand outside in the winter in wet clothes which resulted in kidney problems for which she has been denied treatment. She was later returned to Evin, where she was suffering from an unknown disease. Nobakht had limited conversations with her family. She was allowed to phone her husband and speak to him for a few minutes every one or two months while the security guards monitored the call.

Charges, Trial, and Sentencing

Nobakht was put on trial alongside seven other people and sentenced to 20 years in prison on April 14, 2014, for Facebook posts which allegedly criticized the Iranian regime for being too controlling and Islamic. During the trial, her lawyer was present but was not allowed to speak on her behalf. Later in 2014, Nobakht was granted a retrial where she was allowed to defend herself for the first time. Nobakht was verbally told that her sentence was reduced to seven years, but she was given no legal papers to confirm this. According to her husband, "Roya is not a political activist in any way. She is just a normal citizen."

International Outcry

In 2014 the "Free Roya Now" campaign was launched to highlight Roya's plight and encourage the British government and European Union to put pressure on the Iranian regime to secure Roya's release. On October 24, 2016, a petition was delivered with a letter co-signed by 117 Members of Parliament and members of the House of Lords calling for the release of Roya Saberi and two other British-Iranian dual nationals. The petition, signed by more than 73,000 supporters, was sponsored by Amnesty International, was delivered to the UK Foreign Office. In addition, a petition from Change.org was signed by more than 230,000 supporters and was delivered to Prime Minister Theresa May.

Release

Nobakht was released from prison on August 25, 2017, but she was prohibited from traveling for two years. It is unclear as of June 2020 whether the ban has already expired and whether Nobakht has left Iran.

Xiyue Wang

Chinese-American Graduate Student at Princeton University

Biography

Xiyue Wang was born and raised in Beijing, China and became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 2009. Wang studied in China as a child and into his first year of college when he then dropped out for a chance to study in India. In 2003, Wang was accepted to the University of Washington and received a bachelor's degree in International Studies. He later studied Russian and Eurasian studies at Harvard University, and in 2008 he worked as a Princeton in Asia fellow at the law firm Orrick in Hong Kong. After working at Orrick for a year, Wang moved to Afghanistan to become a Pashto translator for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). In Afghanistan, Wang helped collect bodies or body parts of those killed in clashes and offered aid to those injured and captured, including Taliban militants.

In 2013, Wang began graduate studies in Eurasian History at Princeton University. At the time of his arrest, Wang was working on his dissertation studying regional governance practices across multiple countries in the late 19th and early 20th century. In Iran, he was interested in studying decades-old archival materials on the administrative and cultural history of the Qajar dynasty, which ruled from 1785-1925.

Princeton University professor Stephen Kotkin described Wang as a polite, respectful, and inquisitive researcher who traveled extensively in Central Asia, Russia, Afghanistan, and Iran. Wang is "linguistically gifted," his adviser said, with the ability to speak in Chinese and read in Persian, Turkic, Pashto, and Russian. Kotkin added, he is "everything an adviser could hope for" in a graduate student.

Arrest

Wang was arrested by Iranian authorities on August 8, 2016, as he tried to leave Iran for Russia. Between January 25 and March 10, 2016, Wang visited Iran to attend a Farsi language program at the Dehkhoda Lexicon Institute and International Center for Persian Studies. On May 1, 2016, he returned to Iran to continue his language studies and conduct dissertation research at libraries in Iran. Before traveling to Iran, Wang sent letters explaining his research to the Iranian Interest Section at the Pakistani Embassy in Washington, D.C. (which issued his visa) and to the libraries in Iran that he planned to visit. According to a statement from Princeton University, "he was not involved in any political activities or social activism; he was simply a scholar trying to gain access to materials he needed for his dissertation." The University and Wang's family have been aware of his arrest since August 2016 but decided to keep it confidential based on recommendations that publicity might obstruct efforts to secure Wang's release. Wang's confinement became known publicly on July 16, 2017, when Iran's judiciary announced his sentence, accusing him of "infiltrating" the country and sending confidential material abroad.

Treatment in Prison

Wang was held at Tehran's notoriously brutal Evin Prison starting in August 7, 2016, where he spent his first 18 days in solitary confinement. While Wang was still locked up, Princeton University said, "the prison conditions are difficult and have contributed to a worrisome decline in Mr. Wang's health." Wang has been permitted to make phone calls to his wife on a weekly basis and has had several visits from his attorney.

Charges, Trial, and Conviction

On July 17, 2017, Iran's judiciary announced that Wang was sentenced to 10 years in prison on charges of spying for the United States. A spokesman for Iran's judiciary said that an American had entered the country at the direction of the U.S. and was identified and arrested. "It has been confirmed and verified that this individual has come to Iran for infiltration," the spokesman was quoted as saying.

Wang was accused of entering Iran under the cover of a master's student, but digitally archiving 4,500 pages of Iranian documents and conducting "super confidential research for the U.S. Department of States, Harvard Kennedy School and British Institute of Persian Studies." A report from Mizan, a news agency associated with Iran's judiciary, contains a quote from Wang in which he praises the British Institute for Persian Studies for facilitating access to Iran's National Archives and other libraries. The quote was used as evidence of his spying activities, the report said, adding, "Wang admits his mission in Iran." In the announcement, Iran's judiciary confirmed that Wang is appealing the Iranian court's initial sentence.

International Outcry

On July 18, 2017, Wang's wife Hua Qu, called on authorities to release her husband, saying he was "unjustly imprisoned." In her first comments on his case, Wang's wife described her husband as "one of the kindest, most thoughtful, and loving men I have ever known... Our son has missed his father for more than a year of his young life, as my husband has been unjustly imprisoned for espionage that I

know he did not and would never commit." Princeton University Professor Stephen Kotkin also said, "He is innocent of the charges of espionage."

The U.S. State Department did not provide details on Wang's case but called on Tehran to immediately release "all U.S. citizens unjustly detained in Iran." According to Princeton University, the U.S. communicated with and provided support to Wang while in prison. Since his confinement, Wang has had four consular visits by the Swiss embassy, which represents U.S. interests in Iran. Princeton University has also retained counsel for Wang in Iran, working daily to secure Wang's release and to support him and his family.

In May 2019, Wang reached his 1,000th day in prison—as his wife wrote in an op-ed, a period "twice the time the American diplomats were held hostage from 1979 to 1981."

Release

On December 7, 2019, the Iranian regime released Wang from prison and transferred him to U.S. custody as part of a prisoner swap. Tehran freed Wang in exchange for the U.S. dropping charges against and releasing Iranian national Massoud Soleimani. Soleimani, a scientist, was arrested in 2018 for violating American sanctions laws by conspiring and attempting, without authorization, to export biological materials from the U.S. to Iran. Wang was held hostage by Iran for over 1,200 days.

Michael White

U.S. Navy Veteran

Biography

Michael White is a California native who served for 13 years in the U.S. Navy. He suffers from asthma and cancer. He flew from Los Angeles to Dubai on July 9, 2018, and then from there to Iran to visit a woman he claimed was his girlfriend. He visited her four times in several years, prior to his detention.

Arrest

White's family announced in January of 2019 that he was arrested in July of 2018 while in Iran to visit his girlfriend. The Iranian foreign ministry claimed in January of 2019 that White was arrested "in the city of Mashhad a while ago, and within a few days after his arrest the U.S. government was informed of the arrest through the Swiss Embassy in Tehran." According to his mother, Joanne, he was taken to court at least twice and has been held in Vakilabad Prison. White is the first American—to public knowledge—that Iran has taken hostage during the presidency of Donald Trump.

Treatment in Prison

According to his mother, White, who has asthma and previously had cancer, "was badly beaten when he was arrested and… has been taken to court at least twice for proceedings in Farsi that he couldn't understand. My son is not well. His health is deteriorating, and I want him back so I can get him the care he badly needs." A spokesman for White's mother later said that she was concerned that his cancer had returned. And in August of 2019, after the authorities permitted them to meet with White, Swiss diplomats learned that his cancer had come back. The diplomats were told that prison hospital physicians had excised a melanoma from his back and that White still had other health problems, including dental issues caused by his previous courses of chemotherapy. His mother said that the authorities whipped his bare feet and a gun to his head.

Just after Christmas in 2019, White spoke with his mother, who recorded the conversation, about his jailers' appalling treatment of him. "They've done everything to press me," White said. "They really have. I mean, they put me in isolation. They, like I said, subjected me to torturous conditions, deprivation of food and water, numerous times." White added, "I'm going crazy. This place is a junk hole. Right now, I'm in a cell that's overcrowded, big time. Here's the thing: They don't really bring me food. The prisoners have to pay for it, but I don't have money to be paying for that." White also mentioned that he was so "distraught" that he had wanted to commit suicide and tried to hang himself.

Charges, Trial, and Sentencing

An Iranian prosecutor stated in January of 2019 that White's arrest was premised on the claim of an "individual plaintiff" and that he might be charged with security-related offenses, but was also being investigated for other, undisclosed possible security crimes.

The White family's lawyer announced in March 2019 that White had been convicted of two charges—insulting Iran's leadership and posting private photos on public platforms (namely, uploading a photo of him sitting with his girlfriend)—and sentenced to ten years in prison. The lawyer added that White's court-appointed lawyer did not know English. However, U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo later stated that White was serving a 13-year sentence. White appealed the sentence, but in September of 2019, White's mother said that he had lost his appeal. White's family started a GoFundMe account in 2019 to pay for legal representation.

In a conversation with his mother (who recorded the call) in December of 2019 about the legal system's processing of his case, White claimed that the fix was in against him. "I went to this appellate court thing supposedly," he said, "and they had a phony hearing. Then they bring up allegations of spying that they said before. I'm like what the hell are these guys doing? They have zero evidence. They made stuff up."

International Outcry

Prior to his conditional release, the Trump administration largely did not comment on White's case in particular, while repeatedly calling for Iran to release all its American hostages. In February of 2020, before Iran conditionally released Iran on medical furlough, White's mother complained about the

administration's treatment of his case, saying, "If it was a priority, they would have brought him back already. I don't think they're paying enough attention."

When asked about White's case by a journalist in January 2019, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo lauded the administration's work to get hostages released but demurred from commenting about White. "With respect to the Michael White case in particular, I can't say much," Pompeo said. "It's an ongoing consular matter." However, in January of 2020, Pompeo tweeted about White, saying, "For the second straight year, U.S. Navy veteran Michael White spent his birthday suffering in a horrible Iranian prison. The Iranian regime must release all American and foreign hostages!" In March of 2020, as the novel coronavirus spread in Iran's prisons, Pompeo warned Iran that "[t]he United States will hold the Iranian regime directly responsible for any American deaths. Our response will be decisive."

In March of 2020, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations special rapporteur on human rights in Iran, Javaid Rahman, called on the regime to temporarily release prisoners of conscience and political prisoners.

Temporary Release

As the novel coronavirus ravaged Iran in the spring of 2020, and particularly endangered inmates living in the appalling conditions of the Iranian prison system, the regime temporarily released White and tens of thousands of other prisoners. White was freed on a medical furlough on March 19, 2020, but prohibited by the regime from leaving Iran. White was transferred to the custody of the Swiss embassy, which handles U.S. diplomatic interests in Iran, and was immediately flown to Tehran for treatment.

The White family's spokesman announced on March 25, 2020, that since White's release, he had exhibited "symptoms consistent with COVID-19" and was hospitalized "in a crowded ward for COVID-19 patients." The family requested that White be granted "an immediate humanitarian medical evacuation" to the U.S. The *New York Times* later reported that White had indeed been infected with COVID-19 while imprisoned but had recovered.

White's mother had previously expressed worry that he would contract COVID-19 and die in prison because his immune system was compromised. She said prison personnel had not properly flushed and cleaned White's chemotherapy port, which could cause a possibly lethal blood infection.

Permanent Release

Michael White left Iran on June 4, 2020, after an apparent U.S.-Iranian deal to exchange White for two Iranians detained in the U.S. for alleged crimes. The release capped off months of negotiations between the two governments and aided by Switzerland, which represents U.S. interests in Iran.

An Iranian official and the White family's spokesman confirmed in early May of 2020 that the Iranian and American governments were negotiating a deal to send White home in return for the release of an unnamed Iranian-American doctor out on bail in the U.S. Reports later identified the doctor as Majid Taheri, aka Matteo Taerri. Federal prosecutors charged the doctor, a Florida resident, with violating U.S. sanctions by attempting to export to Iran a filter with applications for biological and chemical warfare.

Taheri was also charged with evading the Bank Secrecy Act, which requires that any bank transfers of $10,000 or more be reported to the Treasury Department, by setting up transfers under the reporting threshold. Taerri pled guilty but was released on bail in March of 2020 at the request of federal prosecutors because of his possible involvement in a swap for Michael White.

Reuters reported that a prisoner trade might involve deportation from the U.S. of another Iranian, academic Sirous Asghari, who was charged with violating American sanctions on Iran by stealing American trade secrets. Asghari was acquitted in 2019 but detained by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency, which was unable to deport him because he had contracted COVID 19 and, because of the pandemic, the number of flights to Iran were drastically diminished. The aforementioned Iranian official stated that "[t]hese three cases are entangled together, Asgari, White, and the Iranian American doctor."

On May 11, 2020, President Trump retweeted a link to an article by *Time* that reported that Iran's cabinet spokesman had indicated his government's willingness to negotiate with Iran "without preconditions" about a prisoner exchange.

On June 2, 2020, two days before Tehran permitted White to leave, the U.S. deported Sirous Asghari to Iran. The day of White's release, the Justice Department also asked a judge to sentence Majid Taheri to time served, and the jurist granted the prosecutors' request. The U.S. government is allowing Taheri to visit relatives and obtain medical care in Iran and then return to the States.