

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei  
Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran  
c/o H.E. Mr. Majid Takht Ravanchi  
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March 25, 2020

**RE: Release Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali amidst concerns of COVID-19**

Your Excellency:

I write to you on behalf of the Swedish University community through the Swedish section of Scholars at Risk to express our grave concern for Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, a scholar of disaster medicine who was sentenced to death in October 2017. Dr. Djalali holds a PhD from Karolinska Institutet in Sweden where I am President. I understand that Dr. Djalali suffers from severely deteriorating health and is at great risk of experiencing adverse effects of the coronavirus disease known as COVID-19. Furthermore, in combatting this pandemic, Iran and the rest of the world would greatly benefit from the expertise of disaster medicine scholars like Dr. Djalali.

I understand from Scholars at Risk (SAR) that Dr. Djalali has been denied medical care several times despite increasing health complications. Following an operation on November 19, 2018, Dr. Djalali was immediately transferred back to Evin Prison and visited by a specialist who discovered that Dr. Djalali's bone marrow cells had severely weakened, indicating a high possibility of leukemia. On the recommendation of the doctor, Dr. Djalali was scheduled to see a blood and cancer specialist at a hospital on February 5, 2019; however, prison authorities prevented him from going. Dr. Djalali remains in prison and continues to suffer severe health complications. Reports indicate that Iranian authorities have released roughly 85,000 individuals from prisons in an effort to contain the outbreak of COVID-19. Authorities have not, however, released Dr. Djalali, who because of his poor health condition, is at greater risk of experiencing adverse effects of the disease.

I welcome any additional information that may explain these events or clarify our understandings. Absent this, Dr. Djalali's conviction, capital sentence, unexpected transfer, allegations of torture – in addition to the circumstances of his arrest and continued confinement – suggest a troubling disregard for international standards of academic freedom, due process, fair trial, and humane

treatment of prisoners, as guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a party.

Furthermore, in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic, Iran and the rest of the world would greatly benefit from the expertise of disaster medicine scholars like Dr. Djalali.

I therefore respectfully urge you to instruct the relevant authorities to immediately release Dr. Djalali and, pending such action, to ensure his well-being and access to legal counsel, family, and medical treatment.

I thank you for your attention to this important matter, and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Ole Petter Ottersen





CC:

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