

URGENT ACTION

UK-IRANIAN CHARITY WORKER NEEDS MEDICAL CARE

British-Iranian charity worker Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe is suffering with severe arm, neck and back pain and needs urgent hospitalization. An appeal court has upheld her five-year prison sentence for the charge of “membership of an illegal group” in connection with her work with BBC Media Action and Thompson Reuters Foundation.

British-Iranian prisoner of conscience **Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe** has been suffering from severe neck, arm, and back pain and has extremely limited movement in her arms. On 4 February, she was seen by a doctor in Evin prison’s clinic, who referred her to a neurology specialist. However, the Office of the Prosecutor refused to authorize her visit to the specialist until 19 February, when she was finally taken to a hospital outside prison. There, the neurologist advised that she needed immediate admission for tests and treatment, without which there was a risk of permanent damage to her right arm and hand. Despite this, she was returned to prison the same day.

On 22 January, during his weekly press conference, judiciary spokesperson Gholamhossein Mohseni Eje'i announced that Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe's five-year prison sentence has been upheld by an appeal court. She had been convicted of “membership of an illegal group” in connection with her work at BBC Media Action and Thompson Reuters Foundation (TRF), a charity organization promoting socio-economic progress, independent journalism and the rule of law. During her appeal hearing on 4 January, she was accused of “working as the head of recruitment for the BBC”, based on her work as an administrative assistant on a project that trained young journalists at BBC Media Action. She was also accused of “being knowingly married to a British spy” because of the Western media coverage of her imprisonment and media interviews given by her husband Richard Ratcliffe. The court took the view that the extent of the media coverage showed that Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe is “an important person”. Her lawyer’s request for a judicial review is now before Branch 33 of the Supreme Court.

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe was arrested on 3 April 2016. In September 2016, following an unfair trial held before a Revolutionary Court in Tehran the previous month, she was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment.

Please write immediately in Persian, English, Arabic, French, Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to release Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe immediately and unconditionally, as she is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for her work in connection with peacefully exercising the right to freedom of expression and association;
- Urging them to ensure that she is immediately granted access to specialized medical care outside prison;
- Calling on them, pending her release, to allow her extended visits with her daughter in a suitable environment, which takes account of the best interests of the child in line with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Iran has ratified;
- Requesting that she be granted access to British consular assistance.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 5 APRIL 2017 TO:

Head of the Judiciary
Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
c/o Public Relations Office
Number 4, Deadend of 1 Azizi
Above Pasteur Intersection
Vali Asr Street, Tehran, Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

Office of the Supreme Leader
Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
Islamic Republic Street- End of Shahid
Keshvar Doust Street
Tehran, Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
President
Hassan Rouhani
The Presidency
Pasteur Street, Pasteur Square
Tehran, Iran

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. H.E. Hamid Baeidinejad, Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 16 PRINCES GATE LONDON SW7 1PT, Tel: 02072254208 or 02072254209 Email: iranconsulate.lon@mfa.gov.ir

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update of UA 117/16. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/5364/2016/en/

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe was about to leave Iran with her young daughter Gabriella Ratcliffe to return to the UK when she was arrested by Revolutionary Guard officials. Before being taken into custody, she was allowed to leave her daughter in the care of her parents, who had accompanied her to the airport. The authorities confiscated her daughter's British passport and refused to provide her family with any information, including the reason for her arrest and detention. The authorities held her in solitary confinement for 45 days and gave her no access to a lawyer until three days before the start of her trial. They initially held her in an unknown location in Tehran for about a week before transferring her to an unknown detention facility in the southern city of Kerman. She was permitted to make a brief telephone call to her family three or four days after her arrest, but was only granted a visit from her family, including her daughter, for the first time on 11 May 2016, in a hotel room in Kerman. On 18 May 2016, she was taken to the women's section of Kerman prison and around a month later, transferred to Evin prison, where she was held for months in Section 2A, which is under the control of the Revolutionary Guards, before being moved to the women's section on 26 December 2016. At the time of her arrest, she was employed as a project manager for TRF, managing journalism and media training projects in countries including Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco and Myanmar and preparing fundraising applications. Since her arrest, state-run news outlets in Iran have claimed that she was a "spy" for TRF and that TRF pursues the interests of Western states by promoting "Western-style" democracy in developing countries and thereby facilitating "the erosion of local cultures and traditions". Amnesty International understands that TRF has no projects on Iran. In June 2016, the head of the justice department of Kerman Province stated that Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe had "conducted actions against the security of the country during the 2009 sedition [referring to the post-presidential election protests] through designing various websites and carrying out media campaigns". These accusations are based solely on the work that she did seven years ago in London as an administrative assistant at BBC Media Action for a project that trained young journalists in Afghanistan and Iran.

In August 2016, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention adopted an Opinion stating that her detention was arbitrary, citing, in particular, the discriminatory factor – namely her status as a dual British-Iranian national – motivating her arrest and detention and the gravity of the breaches of her right to fair trial. The Working Group accordingly called on the Iranian authorities to immediately release her and accord her an enforceable right to compensation.

In November 2016, Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe told her husband that Revolutionary Guard officials had pressured her to choose between moving her daughter into Evin prison with her for up to three days a week or signing a document to say that she forfeits her right to be with her child. In January 2017, she wrote a letter to her daughter, an excerpt of which follows:

"My Gisou, my sweet daughter... Forgive me for the distance and for the moments of loneliness that both of us, or rather, the three of us have endured. Forgive me for all the nights I have not been by your side to hold your warm little hands until you fall asleep... Forgive me for that first week of separation when neither of us knew what was happening, and when you were burning with fever as your way of protesting being separated from your mother... Throughout these past ten months, I woke up every morning with the hope of returning home and holding you to my heart and I went to sleep every night with the dream of freedom in the morning... There is a flame inside me that fires every night with the hope of breathing in your warm breath... I will keep waiting... But one day you must listen to all I have to say. One day I will tell you the story of all these lonely days, the story of pain and separation. There will come a day when we will throw away all these bitter old memories and only keep the lessons that we have learned from them... No injustice remains unanswered."

The full letter can be read in both English and Persian here: <https://www.change.org/p/free-nazanin-ratcliffe/u/19261250>; <http://www.humanrights-ir.org/?p=1689>

Further information on UA: 117/16 Index: MDE 13/5748/2017 Issue Date: 22 February 2017