

September 2021

## **Statement of Solidarity with Imprisoned Scholars and Academic Freedom**

We came together as a group of students from the Ruhr-Universität Bochum to advocate on behalf of imprisoned scholars – Ms. Niloufar Bayani and Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali – in cooperation with Scholars at Risk (SAR) and Amnesty International (AI).

We write this letter to express grave concern for the scholars' wellbeing and want to show our solidarity with any scholar at risk and endorse the implementation of academic freedom worldwide. We ask the international community to join us in advocating for the wellbeing and release of Ms. Bayani and Dr. Djalali.

Ms. Bayani is a researcher, conservationist, and scholar sentenced to ten years in prison; Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali is an Iranian-Swedish scholar of disaster medicine whose health has severely deteriorated and who is at imminent risk of execution. We respectfully call on the appropriate authorities to secure Ms. Bayani's and Dr. Djalali's immediate and unconditional release, to suspend the capital sentence issued against Dr. Djalali and to ensure that he may receive the dire medical care he urgently needs.

We understand from reports of SAR and AI that on January 24, 2018, **Ms. Bayani** was arrested alongside eight of her colleagues, including Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation founder Professor Kavous Seyed-Emami, while conducting field research for the foundation.

On November 23, 2019, authorities convicted and sentenced Ms. Bayani to ten years in prison on charges of “contacts with the U.S. enemy state” and “gaining illegitimate income.” Authorities also reportedly ordered Ms. Bayani to repay all of her pay checks from the United Nations for the time she was employed at UN Environment. Ms. Bayani and her colleagues, who received sentences ranging from six to ten years of jail time, were informed of their verdicts verbally and denied written copies.

Absent additional information, the facts as described suggest that Ms. Bayani's conviction, sentence, and allegations of torture – in addition to the questionable circumstances of Professor Kavous Seyed-Emami's death in custody – 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.

We further understand from SAR and AI that Iranian authorities arrested **Dr. Djalali** in April 2016 while he was traveling to participate in a series of workshops hosted by universities in Tehran and Shiraz. On October 21, 2017, Dr. Djalali was convicted and sentenced to death for “corruption on earth” (ifsad fil-arz), based on unsubstantiated allegations that he had provided intelligence to the Israeli authorities. Dr. Djalali has disputed the allegations, asserting that his ties to the international academic community are the basis of his prosecution. We understand that Dr. Djalali has been denied the right to appeal his conviction and sentence.

On November 24, 2020, Iranian authorities put Dr. Djalali in solitary confinement in preparation to carry out his death sentence. Since then, authorities have postponed the execution but have kept Dr. Djalali in solitary confinement. During his imprisonment, Dr.

Djalali's health has continuously deteriorated. Despite his deteriorating health, access to appropriate medical care has been denied. Dr. Djalali's family fears that he is at high risk of dying in prison as he continues to be denied access to appropriate medical care.

In July 2021 Dr. Djalali's mother passed away from COVID-19. Due to the circumstances of his imprisonment, he was unable to bid her farewell and was deprived of the possibility to mourn his mother's passing.

Absent additional information, the facts as described suggest that Dr. Djalali's arrest, conviction and sentencing display a flagrant disregard for international standards of academic freedom, due process, fair trial, and humane treatment of prisoners, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a party.

We therefore ask the international community to join us in advocating for the wellbeing and release of Ms. Bayani and Dr. Djalali. For this purpose, we ask the international community to urge the relevant Iranian authorities to suspend the capital sentence issued against Dr. Djalali, to secure his immediate release, and, pending such action, to ensure his well-being and access to legal counsel, family, and medical treatment.

Likewise, we ask the international community to urge the relevant Iranian authorities to immediately release Ms. Bayani and, pending such action, to ensure her well-being and access to legal counsel, family, and medical treatment.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

SaR Student Advocacy Seminar at Ruhr-Universität Bochum

Amnesty International Bochum