

# URGENT ACTION

## JAILED IRANIAN KURDISH WOMAN TORTURED

Ministry of Intelligence agents are torturing Iranian Kurdish woman Zeynab Jalalian by deliberately denying her health care to coerce her into providing a videotaped "confession". This intentional denial of health care is causing her severe pain and suffering, particularly as she has serious medical conditions, including post-Covid-19 breathing difficulty.

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

*Head of Judiciary, Ebrahim Raisi  
c/o Embassy of Iran to the European Union  
Avenue Franklin Roosevelt No. 15  
1050 Bruxelles, Belgium*

Dear Mr Raisi,

Since 29 April 2020, as prisons across Iran experienced outbreaks of COVID-19, ministry of intelligence agents have transferred Iranian Kurdish woman **Zeynab Jalalian** to four different prisons across the country and, in violation of the absolute prohibition against torture and other ill-treatment, held her in prolonged solitary confinement and deliberately denied her access to adequate health care. The ministry of intelligence is conditioning access to adequate health care, transfer to a prison closer to her family home in West Azerbaijan province and an end of reprisals against Zeynab Jalalian and her family on her "confessing" to wrongdoing and expressing remorse for her past political activities on camera and agreeing to work with the ministry of intelligence. Zeynab Jalalian has been intentionally denied transfer to outside facilities for medical treatment unavailable in prison for over six years. Only once in 2020, she was briefly provided health care outside of prison in June after testing positive for COVID-19. She has had no further adequate access to health care, including for a post COVID-19 respiratory condition which she said is so acute that it prevents her from sleeping, and for a serious eye condition.

On 29 November 2020, Ali Jalalian, Zeynab Jalalian's father, was arrested by ministry of intelligence officials and interrogated about speaking about his daughter with human rights organizations and media outside of Iran; he was released on bail a day later. Zeynab Jalalian is serving a life sentence in Yazd prison, 1,400 km away from her family home, following a grossly unfair trial in December 2008 that lasted a few minutes without her lawyer present. Following her arbitrary arrest, Zeynab Jalalian was held in prolonged solitary confinement for eight months without access to a lawyer, and has said that, during this period, intelligence officials tortured her including through flogging the soles of her feet, punching her in the stomach, hitting her head against a wall and threatening her with rape.

**I call on you to immediately release Zeynab Jalalian by implementing the recommendation of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which calls for her to be released immediately and accorded an enforceable right to compensation. Pending her release, she must be provided with adequate health care, including transfer to outside facilities for treatment unavailable in prison, protected from further torture and other ill-treatment and transferred to a prison closer to her family home. I call on you to order a prompt, independent, effective and impartial investigation into her allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, bringing to justice anyone found responsible in fair trials and without recourse to the death penalty. I remind you that the harassment and arrest of prisoners' family members solely to stop their public campaigning violates international law and standards.**

Yours sincerely,

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 29 April 2020, Ministry of Intelligence agents took Zeynab Jalalian out of Khoy prison, West Azerbaijan province, which is located in the same province as her family home and where she had been jailed for a number of years. The following day, she was admitted to Shahr-e Rey prison in Varamin, outside of Tehran. In a phone call to her family in early June 2020, Zeynab Jalalian said she had begun to experience shortness of breath on 2 June 2020 and had subsequently tested positive for COVID-19 at the prison's medical clinic. She has said that prison officials told her that the ministry of intelligence had barred her transfer to a hospital outside of prison. On 8 June 2020, Zeynab Jalalian was eventually transferred to a hospital outside of prison and examined for COVID-19, including with a scan of her lungs, and returned to prison. She later said that the hospital doctor again confirmed her COVID-19 diagnosis and told her scans showed cloudy spots on her lungs. The same month, interrogators from the ministry of intelligence visited Zeynab Jalalian in prison and told her that unless she makes videotaped "confessions" repenting and agrees to work with them, they will continue to deny her access to health care and keep her jailed far from her family home. On 20 June 2020, Zeynab Jalalian began a hunger strike in protest at her continued detention in Shahr-e Rey prison, asking to be transferred to Khoy prison or to Tehran's Evin prison, and against the denial of health care. On 25 June 2020, she was transferred to Kerman prison, Kerman province, where she was subsequently held in prolonged solitary confinement for nearly three months, and denied contact with her family until 28 July 2020, when she was permitted a short phone call. During this call, which took place in the presence of interrogators, she said the interrogators instructed her speak to her family in Persian and not in Kurdish, her mother tongue. She also reported that interrogators said they transferred her to Kerman prison because she was in contact with human rights organizations abroad. On 22 September 2020, Zeynab Jalalian was suddenly transferred to Kermanshah prison, Kermanshah province. In a telephone call to her family from Kermanshah prison, she reported a continued cough, respiratory difficulties and an eye inflammation related to her eye condition. On 10 November 2020, she telephoned her family from Yazd prison, Yazd province. Zeynab Jalalian has described the transfers themselves as a type of "mental torture"; each prison transfer has meant adjusting to new prison guards, prisoners and systems. Zeynab Jalalian also added that she has not been able to take all her personal possessions with her during the transfers.

Zeynab Jalalian was arbitrarily arrested in March 2008 for her social and political activities with the political wing of the Party for Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK), which aimed at the empowerment of women belonging to Iran's Kurdish minority and Kurdish self-determination. PJAK is a Kurdish political opposition group, which also has an armed wing. She was sentenced to death in early 2009 on the charge of "enmity against God" (*moharebeh*). Branch One of the Revolutionary Court in Kermanshah Province claimed that she had "taken up arms against the state" despite the absence of any evidence linking her to the armed activities of PJAK. Noting her "alleged membership in the political wing of PJAK" and her movement between Iran and Iraq, the court reasoned that "she may have been indeed involved in terrorist operations but is refraining from telling the truth." Zeynab Jalalian's lawyer, whom she had only been allowed to appoint a few weeks prior to the trial, was denied the opportunity to represent her at the trial, as he was not informed of the date for which it had been scheduled. Her death sentence was upheld on appeal in May 2009 but was commuted to life imprisonment in December 2011 after she was granted clemency by Iran's Supreme Leader. In May 2019, her lawyer Amirsalar Davoudi, was sentenced to a lengthy prison term in relation to his human rights work and Zeynab Jalalian has had no lawyer since, and her family is left to follow up on her case, including requesting her transfer for treatment to outside clinics, without legal guidance. Their ability to do so is further undermined by restrictions introduced to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and by her transfer to different prisons far away from their residence.

In April 2016, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention called on Iran [to release](#) Zeynab Jalalian immediately as she had been detained only for peacefully exercising her rights to freedoms of expression and association through "her activities as a social and political activist for the rights of Kurdish women" and "her involvement in political activism... with the non-militant wing of the PJAK". The Working Group stated that she had been denied the right to a fair trial and that her treatment violated the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The refusal of authorities to provide prisoners with medical care constitutes torture if such deprivation is intentional and inflicts "severe pain or suffering" for such purposes as punishment, coercion or intimidation, obtaining a "confession", or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** [English, Persian]

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** [29 March 2021]

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** [Zeynab Jalalian] (she/her)

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/8598/2018/en/>