

URGENT ACTION

SUICIDE FEARS FOR JAILED BRITISH-IRANIAN WOMAN

British-Iranian charity worker Nazanin Zaghari Ratcliffe, a prisoner of conscience sentenced to five years in prison, wrote her husband a suicide letter and went on hunger strike on 13 November. Amnesty International fears for her physical and mental health.

Prisoner of conscience **Nazanin Zaghari Ratcliffe**, a British-Iranian project manager at Thomson Reuters Foundation, a charity promoting socio-economic progress, independent journalism and the rule of law, contemplated suicide in October after being sentenced to five years' imprisonment on 6 September. Her husband, Richard Ratcliffe, told Amnesty International that her physical health has deteriorated and her spirits have sunk so low that she wrote him a suicide letter in October. She also went on hunger strike on 13 November to express her despair over the prospect of never being released. She became so unwell that the authorities arranged an emergency family visit for her on 18 November. During the visit, her mother collapsed when she saw how thin her daughter had become since her imprisonment. Nazanin Zaghari Ratcliffe agreed to end her hunger strike the same day for the sake of her two-year-old daughter. In prison, she has been suffering from heart palpitations, blurred vision, and pain in her hands, arms and shoulders. Despite two visits to the clinic at Tehran's Evin Prison where she is imprisoned, she has not received adequate medical care.

Nazanin Zaghari Ratcliffe was arrested on 3 April at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Airport by officials from the Intelligence Department of the Revolutionary Guards and held in solitary confinement for 45 days. She was given no access to a lawyer, despite being repeatedly interrogated, until three days before the start of her trial, which took place on 14 August before Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran. She is currently awaiting her appeal verdict. In August, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention said that her detention was arbitrary and called on the Iranian authorities to immediately release her and accord her an enforceable right to compensation. In June, the head of the justice department of Kerman Province stated that her arrest was linked to her involvement with "a network that had conducted actions against the security of the country during the 2009 sedition [referring to the post-presidential election uprising] through designing various websites and carrying out media campaigns". The network mentioned by the official refers to a group of bloggers who were arrested in December 2013 for having links with a foreign-based media organization and its past training courses.

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 peacefully exercising her right to freedom of expression and association;
- Urging them, in the meantime, to ensure that she is protected from torture and other ill-treatment and that she is granted any medical care she may require;
- Calling on them to allow her regular and ongoing contact with an independent lawyer of her own choosing and visits and phone calls from her family, including her husband and daughter;
- Requesting the authorities to grant British consular access to her while she is detained.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 2 JANUARY 2017 TO:

Office of the Supreme Leader
Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
Salutation: **Your Excellency**

Head of the Judiciary
Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
Salutation: **Your Excellency**

And copies to:
President
Hassan Rouhani

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 117/16. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/4068/2016/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Nazanin Zaghari Ratcliffe had been about to leave Iran with her then 22-month-old daughter to return to the UK after visiting her family in Tehran when she was arrested on 3 April. 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. Her family returned to the airport twice after her arrest to inquire about her fate and whereabouts but the authorities refused to provide them with any information, including the reason for her arrest and detention. The authorities initially held her in an unknown location in Tehran for about a week before transferring her to an unknown detention facility in the city of Kerman, nearly 1,000km away from Tehran in the south of Iran. She was only permitted to make a brief telephone call to her family for the first time three or four days after her arrest but was not allowed to give any details during the phone call, including about her whereabouts. On 11 April, her family received a telephone call from an official who only identified himself as the director of a detention centre in Kerman and who said that Nazanin Zaghari Ratcliffe was "fine". The official gave no further details, including her whereabouts. On 27 April, her family received another call, apparently from an official in the Intelligence Department of the Revolutionary Guards who told them that she was being held for "reasons related to national security" and that she would likely be held for another two or three months until their investigation was deemed complete. Her family was asked to prepare some clothes and money for her. For some time after her arrest, she was allowed intermittent telephone contact with her family but not with her husband, though she is now permitted telephone calls with him. It also appears that telephone calls were given as a "reward" and at the discretion of her interrogator who was present during the calls.

Nazanin Zaghari Ratcliffe was only allowed to see her family, including her daughter, for the first time on 11 May, when she was taken to a hotel room in Kerman and permitted a closely supervised visit with her family. She was not allowed to discuss the details of her case. According to her family, she was visibly unwell: she had lost weight and was so weak that she could not stand from her chair and was unable to lift her daughter. She was not allowed access to a lawyer, despite being repeatedly interrogated and told to sign a statement. On 18 May, she was taken to the women's section in Kerman Prison and around a month later, in mid-June, she was transferred to Evin Prison, where she is being held in Section 2-A, under the control of the Revolutionary Guards, in a cell with other prisoners.

On 15 June, the Sarollah Unit of the Revolutionary Guards in the city of Kerman, southern Iran, released a statement saying that Nazanin Zaghari Ratcliffe had "participated in devising and carrying out media and cyber projects aimed at the soft overthrow of the government". It added that she "is one of the leading figures of hostile institutions and has carried out criminal activities over the past few years under the guidance and support of the media and intelligence services of foreign governments". Also in June, the head of the justice department of Kerman Province, Yadollah Movahed, said that between 2014 and 2015 the authorities had identified and subsequently arrested "one of the networks that 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 campaigns in the media". He said that some of this group's members had been outside the country, including in the United Kingdom, and accused Nazanin Zaghari Ratcliffe of being one of them.

On 6 September, following an unfair trial on 14 August, the judge presiding over Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran announced to Nazanin Zaghari Ratcliffe's lawyer that she had been sentenced to five years' imprisonment.

The Iranian authorities have yet to allow Nazanin Zaghari Ratcliffe to receive visits from British consular officials.

Name: Nazanin Zaghari Ratcliffe

Gender m/f: f

Further information on UA: 117/16 Index: MDE 13/5163/2016 Issue Date: 21 November 2016