

Der Präsident
Univ.-Prof. Dr. Peter-André Alt

Freie Universität Berlin, Presidential Office
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Ayatollah Ali Khamenei
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c/o H.E. Mr. Gholamali Khoshroo
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
622 Third Avenue, 34th Floor
New York, NY 10017, USA

Berlin, 26.10.2017

CC: President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Head of the Judiciary of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Director of the Office of International Standards and Legal Affairs of UNESCO, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, United States Secretary of State, Prime Minister of Sweden, Foreign Minister of Belgium, Foreign Minister of Italy, and Scholars at Risk

Your Excellency,

I write as President of Freie Universität Berlin to express grave concern over the death sentence recently issued to Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, a scholar of disaster medicine who was arrested in April 2016 in apparent retaliation for peacefully exercising the right to academic freedom. I respectfully urge you to call on the appropriate authorities to reverse Dr. Djalali's capital sentence immediately and to ensure his unconditional release.

I understand from Scholars at Risk (SAR) that while Dr. Djalali was visiting Iran in April 2016 to participate in a series of workshops hosted by universities in Tehran and Shiraz, authorities arrested him for alleged "collaboration with hostile governments" and "acting against national security." Dr. Djalali was subsequently detained in Evin Prison, forced to sign a confession relating to crimes against the national security of Iran, and threatened with the charge of "enmity against God" (moharebeh), which carries the

death sentence. Since his arrest, Dr. Djalali has been held intermittently in solitary confinement, denied access to a lawyer of his choosing, and allegedly subjected to psychological torture. Despite suffering from medical problems including kidney and heart pain, Dr. Djalali went on a hunger strike in December 2016 to protest his detention; he has reportedly resumed the strike since learning of the conviction and sentence.

I further understand from SAR that on October 21, 2017, Dr. Djalali was convicted and sentenced to death on a charge of “corruption on earth” (ifsad fil-arz). The charge reportedly relates to allegations that Dr. Djalali had been paid by the Israeli authorities to spy on the Iranian government. The government has disclosed no evidentiary basis for these allegations, and Dr. Djalali has disputed them, asserting that his ties to the international academic community are the bases for his prosecution. According to his wife and Italian diplomatic sources, Dr. Djalali has 20 days to appeal the sentence.

Absent additional information that may explain these events or clarify my understanding, the conviction and capital sentencing of Dr. Djalali, following reports of a forced confession and denial of due process, 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.

I therefore respectfully urge you to intervene, urging the relevant authorities to reverse Dr. Djalali’s capital sentence immediately, to ensure his unconditional release from prison, and to drop all charges against him.

Finally, I would like to point out that Freie Universität Berlin is training right now a significant number of Iranian doctoral students. In addition, my university has always welcomed academic delegations and scholars from Iran on its campus and is keen to intensify the collaboration with Iran’s renowned universities. However, our very name “Freie Universität” and our motto “Truth, Justice, Freedom” oblige me to raise my voice and remind Iran of its own obligations under the treaties mentioned above. If Iran wants its universities to be acknowledged as equals by its academic peers in the free world, it has to respect the values of academic freedom.

I appreciate your attention to this important matter and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P. Alt'.

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Peter-André Alt
President
Freie Universität Berlin