



Canadian Friends of a Democratic Iran
Amis Canadiens d'un Iran Démocratique

March 20, 2020

URGENT

Hon. Javaid Rehman,
Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran
Geneva, Switzerland

Dear Mr. Rehman

Re: Urgent plight of Iranian political prisoners during COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has already caused a major catastrophe globally. Among its related events, the mistruths, cover-ups and disinformation, coupled with total disregard for human lives and the incompetence of Iranian regime leaders, have caused an exponential growth of the virus inside Iran. This has led reportedly to more than 6400 deaths across the country so far. The WHO team, which arrived in Tehran to assess the situation, confirmed that the scale of the human losses is under-reported by officials.

One of the most vulnerable communities poised to contract the virus are prisoners, who did not have adequate access to health care even without the pandemic. The Great Tehran Prison (Fashafouyeh) is a prime example: scores of political prisoners are held there, as you know, and despite the regime's gesture to release some prisoners, I understand that none of these political prisoners was released. In a statement released a few days ago, more than 40 political prisoners in that prison said they would begin a hunger strike to demand that their situation be raised. Most of them were arrested in the November 2019 uprising, when more than 1500 people were brutally killed by security forces and the IRGC, including at least 23 children according to Amnesty International.

In their statement, the political prisoners said that some inmates have already died due to the virus; the refusal of the authorities to grant them release, they

noted, amounts to another crime against humanity that has rendered them “buried alive”.

We Canadians have numerous unresolved cases against the current regime in Iran, including its refusal to hand over the black boxes of Ukrainian Airlines flight 752, in which at least 57 Canadian citizens died on Jan. 8th as a result of its military shooting down a passenger aircraft with two missiles. We believe the spread of COVID-19 in Iran’s prisons against defenceless, unprotected and vulnerable political prisoners is already a disaster with generational consequences.

In the circumstances, we urge you to press as hard as you can to ensure that political prisoners, who were already suffering a huge injustice for seeking justice and human dignity for all Iranians, are released and safeguarded from this pandemic.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Kilgour", with a stylized circular mark at the beginning.

Hon. David Kilgour, J.D.,
Co-Chair.

CC:

Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

Hon. Francois-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canada

Hon. Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General

Hon. Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organization