

**29 March 2021****Horror at fate of Ahmadreza Djalali in solitary confinement in Iran****Joint statement by Swedish and German Rectors' Conferences**

Human rights experts at the United Nations are on high alert and have voiced their concerns at the worsening, life-threatening situation of the Swedish-Iranian scientist Dr Ahmadreza Djalali, who has been arbitrarily arrested and detained in Iran.

Against this backdrop, the Chair of the Board of the Swedish Association of Higher Education Institutions (SUHF), Professor, Ph.D. Astrid Söderbergh Widding, and the President of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), Prof Dr Peter-André Alt, in a joint open letter are urgently calling for Iran's leaders to lift the death penalty and release the scientist from prison immediately.

Djalali, who was sentenced to death in 2017 for "corruption on earth", has been left without adequate medical care in spite of being strongly suspected of having leukaemia, and has been tortured, according to Amnesty International and Scholars at Risk. He has been in solitary confinement for more than 100 days under the constant threat of the death penalty.

Speaking today in Berlin, Peter-André Alt said: "The latest report from the UN experts clearly highlights how tragically bad Dr Djalali's situation is. The independent group of experts has expressed their concern that solitary confinement and the denial of medical help will lead to Dr Djalali's death. Iran's actions are rightly classified as torture. I am appalled that Iran is showing such utter disregard for human rights and academic freedom and destroying the life of a respected scientist. Iran must release Dr Djalali now and restore his freedom or this will inevitably spell disaster."

Speaking in Stockholm, Astrid Söderbergh Widding said: "It is with utmost consternation that we, the Swedish academic community, have received the latest news from the UN experts on our wrongfully convicted colleague Dr Djalali, and his increasingly alarming situation as he is being held in solitary confinement and deprived of medical care. We are shocked by Iran's inhuman treatment of Dr Djalali and the complete lack of respect that is shown in this case both for academic freedom and human dignity. We forcefully demand his immediate release."

The latest statement from the United Nations human rights experts can be found [here](#).

The SUHF and HRK emphatically support the urgent call by Scholars at Risk, the international network for the protection of at-risk researchers, to send letters of support for Ahmadreza Djalali to the Iranian Government.

Dr Ahmadreza Djalali is a disaster medicine specialist who has both Iranian and Swedish citizenship. He was arrested in Iran in April 2016 and subsequently sentenced to death in October 2017 for "corruption on earth" (ifsad fil-azr).

Iran's Supreme Court denied a request to review the verdict in February 2018. For some time now, Dr Djalali has been refused proper medical treatment despite it being strongly suspected that he may have leukaemia. Scholars at Risk has accused the Iranian security forces of torturing the researcher. Amnesty International has also reported attempts to force him to confess. Dr Djalali has been in solitary confinement since the end of November 2020. He had previously been transferred to another prison in preparation for the purpose of execution of the death penalty. The scientist's health has continued to deteriorate dramatically under the conditions of his solitary confinement. UN experts evaluate solitary confinement as torture.

The [Swedish Rectors' Conference](#), Swedish Association of Higher Education Institutions (SUHF), represents the interests of universities and university colleges in Sweden.

The [German Rectors' Conference](#) represents the interests of the state and state-recognised universities in Germany.

[To the joint open letter from the HRK and SUHF](#)

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