

The President  
Prof Dr Peter-André Alt

HRK Hochschulrektorenkonferenz, Leipziger Platz 11, 10117 Berlin

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei  
Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran  
c/o H.E. Mr. Majid Takht Ravanchi  
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  
P.O. Box 20432  
New York, NY 10017, USA

Contact:

Dr Gordon Bölling  
International Department

Details:

phone: +49 228 887-128  
boelling@hrk.de

Reference:

C2

(cc: see final page)

## Release Dr Ahmadreza Djalali amidst concerns of COVID-19

16 April 2020

Your Excellency:

I write to express grave concern for Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, a scholar of disaster medicine who was sentenced to death in October 2017. I understand that Dr. Djalali suffers from severely deteriorating health and is at great risk of experiencing adverse effects of the coronavirus disease known as COVID-19. I respectfully urge you to call on the appropriate authorities to immediately release Dr. Djalali.

I understand from Scholars at Risk (SaR) that Dr. Djalali remains in prison and has been denied medical care several times despite increasing health complications. Recent reports indicate that Iranian authorities have released roughly 85,000 individuals from prisons in an effort to contain the outbreak of COVID-19. Authorities have not, however, released Dr. Djalali, who because of his poor health condition, is at greater risk of experiencing adverse effects of the disease.

The German Rectors' Conference (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz / HRK) is the umbrella organisation of public and government-recognised universities in Germany. The HRK brings together all major German universities and universities of applied sciences. The HRK itself and a large number of its 268 member institutions believe that German-Iranian cooperation in the fields of science, research, and exchange

holds great potential. Currently, there are 80 formal agreements between higher education institutions in Germany and Iran. The broad scope of cooperation ranges from the exchange of students, doctoral candidates, and senior researchers to joint research and publications. Over the last five years, in particular, we have taken significant steps towards strengthening our ties with partner institutions in Iran. We would like to build on these success stories and the positive outcomes of numerous joint initiatives, workshops, and visits of both German and Iranian delegations. The coronavirus pandemic calls for collaboration across borders and necessitates a truly international response. German-Iranian cooperation certainly holds the potential to make a significant impact in the fight against COVID-19. In combatting the COVID-19 pandemic, Iran, Germany, and the rest of the world would greatly benefit from the expertise of disaster medicine scholars like Dr. Djalali.

As mentioned in an entire series of letters in support of Dr. Djalali, we strongly believe that international cooperation must be firmly grounded in the standards of academic freedom and the protection of human rights. Without these principles, a successful and lasting partnership between Iran and Germany will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to uphold. I once again ask you to respect the foundations on which the future of Iranian-German partnership must rest. A strong and unwavering commitment to academic freedom and human rights must be at the very centre of our cooperation.

Dr. Djalali's conviction, capital sentence, and the affirmation thereof, unexpected transfer, and torture – in addition to the circumstances of his arrest and confinement – 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 instruct the relevant authorities to immediately release Dr. Djalali and, pending such action, to ensure his well-being and access to legal counsel, family, and medical treatment.

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

Sincerely,



Professor Dr. Peter-André Alt  
President

cc:

- Scholars at Risk Network  
New York, United States of America
- President Hassan Rouhani  
President of the Islamic Republic of Iran
- The Honorable Ayatollah Ebrahim Raeisi  
Head of the Judiciary of the Islamic Republic of Iran
- The Honorable Santiago Villalpando  
Director of the Office of International Standards and Legal Affairs, UNESCO
- The Honorable Michelle Bachelet  
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- The Honorable Javaid Rehman  
United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the  
Islamic Republic of Iran
- The Honorable Joseph Borrell  
High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security  
Policy and Vice President of the European Commission
- The Honorable Stefan Löfven  
Prime Minister of Sweden
- The Honorable Phillippe Goffin  
Foreign Minister of Belgium
- The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
United States Secretary of State
- The Honorable Luigi Di Maio  
Foreign Minister of Italy