



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

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The Rt Hon. Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
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Dear George

Thank you for your correspondence of 30 October to the Foreign Secretary, on behalf of a number of your constituents, about Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Anoosheh Ashoori. I am replying as the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa.

We remain committed to securing the full and permanent release of all arbitrarily detained dual British nationals in Iran. The Foreign Secretary has raised the UK's serious concerns about Iran's practice of detaining foreign and dual nationals directly with Foreign Minister Zarif repeatedly, and the Prime Minister has also raised this issue with President Rouhani. Our Ambassador in Tehran regularly raises our detainees with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Iran does not recognise dual nationality nor grant consular access to our dual national detainees. We have repeatedly pressed, and will continue to press, for exceptional consular access and appropriate medical care.

It is indefensible that Iran has brought new charges against Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe. On 29 October, we summoned the Iranian Ambassador to express our deep concern about these new charges. In addition, the UK Government issued a Note Verbale formally requesting UK Government attendance at Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe's 2 November hearing. So far, despite repeated requests, we have never been granted access to Iranian judicial hearings for any of our dual British national detainees. We continue determinedly to lobby for access to them.

We have consistently called for Nazanin's full release and been clear that she must not be returned to prison. This is an arbitrary detention and her treatment has been totally unacceptable, including a lack of due process in proceedings against her. Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe's temporary discharge from prison is a first step but she must be allowed to return home to be reunited with her family.

The Prime Minister met Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe's husband Richard Ratcliffe on 23 January, and the Foreign Secretary spoke to him most recently on 27 October to reinforce the UK's support for bringing his wife home. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office remains in regular contact with both Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe and her family, and we continue to provide our support.

We also continue to call on the Iranian government immediately to allow health professionals into Evin prison to assess the situation of dual British nationals there. We have called for the urgent release of arbitrarily detained dual British nationals on humanitarian grounds, including Mr Ashoori. Our Embassy in Tehran continues to request consular access to him. We have been supporting his family since being made aware of his detention. The Foreign Secretary met with Mr Ashoori's wife on 16 October 2019 and have remained in contact with the family, most recently on 27 October to reinforce the UK's support for bringing her husband home.

In addition, we regularly raise human rights with Iran at all levels, and we continue to take action with the international community to press Iran to improve its poor record on human rights issues. This includes using all appropriate opportunities during the UN General Assembly. On 25 September, at the Human Rights Council the UK co-signed a joint statement, along with 46 other states, in which we set out our deep unease about the persistent human rights violations in Iran and called for perpetrators to be held accountable.

On 22 September, we summoned the Iranian ambassador and handed over a letter from E3 Foreign Ministers about the human rights situation in Iran, including our shared concern about the arbitrary detention of dual nationals. The ambassador in Tehran will continue to raise this with his Iranian counterpart.

We continue to support the work done by the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Iran and urge Iran to allow him to enter the country to conduct research and investigations into human rights concerns reported there. Our Ambassador to Tehran will continue to raise human rights concerns with the Iranian authorities at every appropriate opportunity.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several fluid, connected strokes, positioned above the printed name.

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