



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

The Rt Hon. James Cleverly MP
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Our ref: MC2021/00096

21 January 2021

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

Thank you for your email of 4 January 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 immediate and permanent release of arbitrarily detained dual British nationals in Iran. The Foreign Secretary continues to raise the UK's serious concerns about Iran's practice of detaining foreign and dual nationals with Foreign Minister Zarif, most recently on 16 November 2020, and the Prime Minister has raised the issue with President Rouhani. Our Ambassador in Tehran consistently raises our detainees with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Iran bringing these new charges against Mrs Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe is indefensible and unacceptable. We have been consistently clear that she must not be returned to prison. This is an arbitrary detention and her treatment has been totally unacceptable, including the lack of due process in proceedings against her.

On 22 September and 29 October 2020, we summoned the Iranian Ambassador to make clear our deep concern about these new charges. In addition, the British Government issued a Note Verbale formally requesting British Government attendance at Mrs Ratcliffe's 2 November 2020 hearing. So far, we have, regrettably, never been granted access to Iranian judicial hearings for any of our dual British national detainees, but we continue to lobby firmly for access to them.

We are relieved that the groundless new trial was adjourned and that Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe remains on furlough, but we will continue to demand that Iran makes Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe's release permanent. We remain committed to securing the immediate and permanent release of arbitrarily detained dual British nationals in Iran.

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 has remained in contact with the family, most recently on 27 October 2020, 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.

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.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'James Cleverly', written in a cursive style.

The Rt Hon. James Cleverly MP
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