

7 March 2017

Working Group on Arbitrary Detention
c/o Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
United Nations Office at Geneva
8-14, avenue de la Paix
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
e-mail: wgad@ohchr.org

**RE: Request for follow-up to WGAD Opinion No. 1/2016 in the matter of
Zeinab Jalalian v. Islamic Republic of Iran**

Dear Madam/Sir,

On the occasion of International Women's Day, we, the undersigned non-governmental human rights organisations, REDRESS and Justice for Iran, are writing to call upon the WGAD to follow-up on its Opinion No. 1/2016 in the matter of *Zeinab Jalalian v. Islamic Republic of Iran*, adopted on 18 April 2016. Ms Jalalian continues to be detained and her health situation is worsening as the authorities restrict her access to urgently needed medical treatment.

Ms Jalalian was arrested on or around 10 March 2008 without any charges being laid against her. Several months later, Ms Jalalian learnt that she was facing charges of "enmity against God" (*Moharebeh*) and affiliation with an opposition party to the Islamic Republic of Iran. The arrest was followed by legal proceedings that failed to comply with international standards for a fair trial and the issuing of a death sentence, which in 2011 was commuted to life imprisonment. During her detention, Ms Jalalian was subjected to countless acts of torture and ill-treatment, including continuous pressure to plead guilty to false charges including of having engaged in military cooperation with the PJAk in interviews that would be broadcast on television. The methods of torture and ill-treatment included long interrogations, beatings while being blindfolded, flogging under her feet, threats of rape and solitary confinement. Moreover, Ms Jalalian consistently has been deprived of adequate medical treatment, including urgently needed eye surgery due to advanced Pterygium (conjunctiva) that

could result in loss of vision. Currently, she is unable to read the newspaper, watch television or look at any computer screen.

In its Opinion, the WGAD ordered Iran to immediately release and provide compensation to Ms Jalalian, believed to be the only female political prisoner currently sentenced to life imprisonment in Iran. The WGAD also expressed “grave concern” that her mental and physical integrity may be at risk of “irreparable harm”, requesting the Government of Iran to “take the necessary steps to remedy the situation of Ms. Jalalian without delay.” The WGAD further urged the Government of Iran “to fully investigate the circumstances surrounding [Ms Jalalian’s] arbitrary deprivation of liberty, and to take appropriate measures against those responsible for the violation of her rights”, as well as to ensure that she “is not subjected to further torture or ill-treatment.”

As of this date, Ms Jalalian has been illegally detained for nine years, and almost eleven months have passed since the WGAD opinion. Yet, to our knowledge, the Islamic Republic of Iran has not only failed to respond in any way to the WGAD communication and subsequent opinion, but has continued to restrict Ms Jalalian access to vital medical treatment she needs. In early February 2016, prison officials demanded to hold one of Jalalian’s family members hostage in exchange for her temporary release for medical purposes. When the family asked the prison officials to keep Zeinab’s father in exchange for her temporary release, the prison officials responded that they would want to keep a younger member of the family instead.¹

The Iranian authorities have also subjected her to continuous pressure to provide a recorded interview. These pressures had increased in February and March 2016 according to Kurdish human rights groups.²

In late May 2016, a propaganda documentary³ broadcasted by a state-owned local television station in Mahabad, West Azerbaijan, featuring an interview with Zeinab Jalalian, along with other former and current Kurdish political prisoners, repudiating their past involvements with Kurdish movements of resistance, including their affiliation with opposition parties such as the PJAK. In her interview, Ms Jalalian denied having been deprived of medical treatment and visitation rights, stating that her “health problems” are “minor” and blaming human rights groups for exaggerating her issues. The documentary also featured Zeinab Jalalian’s brother recognizing that he is able to visit her at the prison and stating that Zeinab was “pleased to learn that her death sentence was reduced to life imprisonment” in 2011. The documentary goes on to provide a false narrative of Zeinab Jalalian’s involvement with the PJAK and states that she travelled to Iran in 2008 to carry out a terrorist attack. The well-documented evidence filed in support of our March 2015 petition before the WGAD, including

¹ <http://justice4iran.org/j4iran-activities/shocking-development-in-jalalians-case-government-proposes-to-keep-a-family-member-hostage/>

² <http://kurdistanhumanrights.net/fa/?p=985>

³ Available at: <http://www.aparat.com/v/xCnvR> (last accessed on February 19, 2017), at 14:45 to 18:55

sworn statements by Zeinab Jalalian's sister who currently lives in Irak and one of her co-detainees directly contradict this narrative. The evidence further establishes the pressure exerted on Ms Jalalian since her arrest, to provide recorded interviews confirming the Iranian authorities' false accusations against her.

In October and November 2016, Amnesty International released an urgent action followed by a formal petition addressed to the Iranian Head of Judiciary, reporting on Zeinab Jalalian's worsening health condition⁴ and calling for her immediate release and access to the medical treatment she needs.⁵

In light of the above and considering the Government of Iran's total disregard for its obligations towards Zeinab Jalalian under domestic and international law, including the WGAD's opinion, REDRESS and Justice for Iran respectfully submit that an urgent follow-up on the current circumstances of Ms Jalalian is warranted. We therefore urge the WGAD to once again call upon the Government of Iran to comply with its May 2016 opinion and, more specifically, to grant Ms Jalalian the long-due sick leave that her family and herself have repeatedly requested during the past years.

Sincerely,



Carla Ferstman
REDRESS, Director



Shadi Sadr
Justice for Iran, Executive Director

⁴ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/4931/2016/en/>

⁵ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/take-action/w4r-iran-zeynab-jalalian/>