

# URGENT ACTION

## SEVERELY-ILL IRANIAN KURDISH WOMAN DENIED CARE

**Iranian Kurdish woman Zeynab Jalalian, serving a life sentence, is severely ill and requires specialized medical care outside prison. However, the authorities have persistently refused to transfer her to a hospital, apparently to punish her and extract forced “confessions”. In protest, she has been refusing all medications since March 2017. The denial of access to medical care in these circumstances amounts to torture.**

Severely-ill Iranian Kurdish prisoner **Zeynab Jalalian**, 35, who is serving a life sentence in Khoj prison, West Azerbaijan Province after a grossly unfair trial, has been refusing all medications since March 2017 in protest at the authorities' refusal to provide her with adequate medical care; their false claims to the UN that she is in perfect health and receives regular medical care; and their tampering with her medical records making it appear that she undergoes weekly check-ups. Zeynab Jalalian is at risk of losing her eyesight in prison as she is being denied specialized medical care for a worsening eye condition. She suffers from a serious case of pterygium, a wing-shaped growth of tissue that starts on the white of the eye and spreads across the cornea if left untreated. Since 2014, doctors have recommended surgery to remove the pterygium on her eyes, as it is impairing her vision and causing her severe discomfort. However, the authorities have refused to transfer her to a hospital outside prison to receive the surgery, and have only given her eye drops, which do not treat her condition.

Zeynab Jalalian also suffers from heart problems, intestinal and kidney complications, and an oral thrush condition that has caused painful white bumps on her tongue and interferes with her ability to eat and swallow. Since around March 2017, the right side of her body has gone also numb and the reason remains unknown as she has not received any diagnostic tests. According to her lawyer, over the past two years, she has repeatedly asked the prison authorities to take her to a hospital outside prison for specialized testing and treatment for these health problems but the authorities have ignored her requests. Some of her requests have been rejected outright while others have been accepted on condition that she makes videotaped “confessions”.

### **Please write immediately in Persian, English, Arabic or your own language:**

- Immediately provide Zeynab Jalalian with the specialized medical care she needs outside prison, including eye surgery, and protect her from further torture and other ill-treatment, including through the denial of adequate medical care;
- Implement the recommendation of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which calls for Zeynab Jalalian to be released immediately and accorded an enforceable right to compensation;
- Order a prompt, independent and impartial investigation into her allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, bringing to justice anyone found responsible, including those with superior responsibility, in fair trials and without recourse to the death penalty.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 6 OCTOBER 2017 TO:**

Prosecutor General of Iran  
 Mohammad Jafar Montazeri  
 Office of the Prosecutor General of Iran  
 Khayyam Street (opposite Behesht  
 Street), Tehran, Iran  
 info@dadsetani.ir  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Head of the Judiciary  
 Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani  
 Number 4, Deadend of 1 Azizi  
 Above Pastour Intersection  
 Vali Asr Street, Tehran, Iran  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**And copies to:**  
Permanent Representative to the UN in  
 Geneva  
 Mohsen Naziri Asl  
 Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 28  
 1209 Geneva, Switzerland

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.** H.E. Hamid Baeidinejad, Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 16 PRINCES GATE LONDON SW7 1PT, Tel: 02072254208 or 02072254209 Email: [iranconsulate.lon@mfa.gov.ir](mailto:iranconsulate.lon@mfa.gov.ir)

**Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.** This is the second update of UA 151/14. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/4931/2016/en/>

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Zeynab Jalalian was arrested in March 2008 for her social and political activities with the political wing of the Party for Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK), which aimed at the empowerment of women belonging to Iran's Kurdish minority and Kurdish self-determination. PJAK is a Kurdish political opposition group which also has an armed wing. Zeynab Jalalian was held in solitary confinement for eight months without access to a lawyer. She has said that during this period, intelligence officials tortured her including through flogging the soles of her feet, punching her in the stomach, hitting her head against a wall, and threatening her with rape. She was sentenced to death in early 2009 on the charge of "enmity against God" (*moharebeh*).

Zeynab Jalalian's trial was grossly unfair and lasted no more than a few minutes. Branch One of the Revolutionary Court in Kermanshah Province claimed that she had "taken up arms against the state" despite the absence of any evidence linking her to the armed activities of PJAK. Noting her "alleged membership in the political wing of PJAK" and her movement between Iran and Iraq, the court reasoned that "she may have been indeed involved in terrorist operations but is refraining from telling the truth." This is a violation of the right to presumption of innocence, which requires that everyone charged with a criminal offence is presumed and treated as innocent until and unless a court has judged after a fair trial that the charge has been proved beyond reasonable doubt by the prosecution. Zeynab Jalalian's lawyer, whom she had only been allowed to appoint a few weeks prior to the trial, was denied the opportunity to represent her at the trial as he had not been informed of the date for which it had been scheduled. Her death sentence was upheld on appeal in May 2009 but was commuted to life imprisonment in December 2011 after she was granted clemency by Iran's Supreme Leader.

Since her arrest, Zeynab Jalalian has consistently been under pressure from the authorities to make videotaped "confessions". In May 2016, she was featured in a state television programme called "The Shadow of Terrorism". It denounced PJAK as a "deadly terrorist group" bent on "brainwashing" and recruiting "gullible" youths and children and killing women and children. The programme referred to reports about Zeynab Jalalian's denial of access to medical care as "a typical propaganda tactic by the terrorist PJAK to take advantage of a victim". Zeynab Jalalian was shown in the programme saying: "The reports about me having lost my sight, my life being at risk or that I am sick are not true. I have had some medical problems but they have been minor." This account was reinforced with lengthier interviews with the head of Khoy Prison, a prison social worker, and a woman introduced as Zeynab Jalalian's cell mate whose face was blurred. They claimed that Zeynab Jalalian has had full access to medical care and her eye pain has been resolved with the use of eye drops. Her sister has since told Amnesty International that Zeynab Jalalian has retracted her statements in this programme, saying that she was coerced into making them. Following the broadcast, Zeynab Jalalian's lawyer stated in an interview that both her eye condition and her mouth infection were worsening, the basic treatment provided in the prison clinic was insufficient, and she required specialist treatment in a hospital.

In April 2016, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention called on Iran to release Zeynab Jalalian immediately as she had been detained only for peacefully exercising her rights to freedoms of expression and association through "her activities as a social and political activist for the rights of Kurdish women" and "her involvement in political activism... with the non-militant wing of the PJAK". The Working Group stated that she had been denied the right to a fair trial and that her treatment violated the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The refusal of authorities to provide prisoners with medical care constitutes torture if such deprivation is intentional and inflicts "severe pain or suffering" for such purposes as punishment, coercion or intimidation, obtaining a "confession", or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind. See Amnesty International's report: *Health care taken hostage: Cruel denial of medical care in Iran's prisons*, 18 July 2016: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/4196/2016/en/>

Further information on UA: 151/14 Index: MDE 13/7005/2017 Issue Date: 25 August 2017