

# URGENT ACTION

## IRANIAN KURDISH WOMAN DENIED MEDICAL CARE

**Iranian Kurdish woman Zeynab Jalalian is being subjected to torture by the Iranian authorities, who are deliberately blocking her access to specialized medical care, despite her deteriorating health in Khoy prison, West Azerbaijan Province. She has several medical conditions, including a heart problem and a severe dental infection.**

Critically ill Iranian Kurdish prisoner **Zeynab Jalalian** is being denied access to urgently required dental treatment outside Khoy prison, West Azerbaijan Province, where she is serving a life sentence following a grossly unfair trial. The medical staff at the prison have requested her transfer to a dental clinic outside the prison to receive treatment for a severe dental infection, which she has had for three months. Despite this, the authorities have denied the request, citing the “security” nature of her case as justification.

Zeynab Jalalian also has heart, intestinal, and kidney problems, as well as an oral thrush condition that has caused painful white bumps on her tongue and interferes with her ability to eat and swallow. She is at risk of losing her eyesight in prison as she is being denied surgery for a worsening eye condition called pterygium, which is impairing her vision and causing her severe discomfort. The right side of her body is numb, the reason for which remains unknown, as she has not received any diagnostic tests. Additionally, she is experiencing dips and spikes in her blood pressure, which the prison doctor has said is linked to the stress and psychological pressure she is under. She has repeatedly asked the prison authorities to take her to a hospital outside the prison for specialized testing and treatment for her health problems but the authorities have either rejected outright her requests or have accepted them on the condition that she make videotaped “confessions”. She has been refusing all medication since March 2017 in protest at the authorities’ refusal to provide her with adequate medical care. Following a meeting with the head of Khoy prison around the beginning of June 2018, she said that, if the authorities continued to deny her access to a dentist, she would escalate her protest, without specifying what measures she would take.

In a letter written from inside prison on 11 June, Zeynab Jalalian says: “I have been forced to endure intense pain... As a political prisoner, I have no rights... The authorities have not taken me to see a doctor but have lied to the media by telling them that I have seen one.”

### 1) TAKE ACTION

**Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:**

- Immediately provide Zeynab Jalalian with the specialized medical care she needs outside prison, including eye surgery and dental treatment, 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.

**Contact these two officials by 27 July, 2018:**

Prosecutor General of Iran  
Mohammad Jafar Montazeri  
 Office of the Prosecutor General of Iran  
 Khayyam Street (opposite Behesht Street)  
 Tehran, Iran  
 Email: [info@dadsetani.ir](mailto:info@dadsetani.ir)  
**Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General**

H.E. Gholamali Khoshroo, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations  
 622 Third Avenue, 34th Floor  
 New York, NY 10017  
 Phone: 212 687-2020 | Fax: 212 867 7086  
 Email: [iran@un.int](mailto:iran@un.int)  
**Salutation: Dear Permanent Representative**

### 2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

[Click here](#) to let us know if you took action on this case! *This is Urgent Action 151.14*

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since 2014, doctors have recommended surgery to remove the pterygium, a wing-shaped growth of tissue that starts on the white of the eye and spreads across the cornea if left untreated. Zeynab Jalalian requires surgery on her eyes for this condition; 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. She refuses to take medication in protest at the false claims made by the authorities to the UN that she is in perfect health and receives regular medical care, as well as their tampering with her medical records to make it appear that she undergoes weekly check-ups.

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. She 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*). Her 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." 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 was not 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 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 had had full access to medical care and her eye pain had 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.

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/>.

Name: Zeynab Jalalian  
Gender m/f: f

Further information on UA: 151/14 Index: MDE 13/8598/2018 Issue Date: 15 June 2018