



February 2021

**Our Next Meeting:
Thursday, February 11th,
7:00pm via Zoom.**

**Contact Ron for information
on attending the virtual
meeting.**



*“Letters aren’t just a simple
gesture of solidarity, they
become a source of hope and
they have the potential to
change people’s lives. I am
living proof.”*

**Nestor Fantini, former
political prisoner
in Argentina**

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Urgent Action: China

Appeal Rejected, Health Continues to Deteriorate

NAME AND PRONOUN: Yu Wensheng (He/Him)

On December 27, 2020, the Jiangsu Provincial People’s High Court rejected Yu Wensheng’s appeal of his four-year prison sentence for “inciting subversion of state power”, passed down after a secret trial in June 2020. After almost three years without access to his family, Yu Wensheng was finally able to take part in a video call with his wife Xu Yan on January 14, 2021. Afterward, Xu expressed grave concerns about the apparent deterioration of Yu’s health. In addition to being unable to use his right arm due to nerve damage, Yu continues to show signs of malnutrition. He is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression, and must be immediately and unconditionally released.

Yu Wensheng is a prominent human rights lawyer in Beijing who has represented a number of high-profile human rights cases, including Falun Gong practitioners and fellow human rights lawyer Wang Quanzhang, who was detained and charged with “subverting state power” during the mass crackdown on lawyers and activists starting in July 2015.

On June 17, 2020, Yu was sentenced to four years’ imprisonment and deprivation of political rights for three years in a secret trial. Shortly after Yu’s sentencing, an appeal to the Jiangsu Provincial People’s High Court was filed. On December 27, 2020, Yu’s lawyers received the decision in writing from Jiangsu Provincial People’s High Court that Yu’s appeal was rejected, and the court upheld the original sentencing. According to the judgement, Yu is scheduled to be released on March 1, 2022.

Yu Wensheng will soon be transferred from the detention facility to a prison to complete his sentence. It is still unknown which prison he will be sent to. However, Yu requested to be transferred to a prison in Beijing where his hukou is and where his family is. Hukou is a system of household registration system in China that officially identifies a person as a permanent resident of an area and includes information such as name, parents, spouse and date of birth.

When Yu was granted the first meeting with his lawyer in August 2020, after more than 18 months in detention, he shared that he had been sprayed with pepper spray water and was at times required to sit on a metal chair for an extended period of time, until he partially lost consciousness. Yu also said that he was often not given enough food and that he suffered heatstroke in the summer and was cold in the winter.

After three years of no access to his family members, Yu Wensheng was finally granted a video call with his wife on January 14, 2021. Unfortunately, the call only lasted 25 minutes, five minutes shorter than the standard visiting

period at Xuzhou City Detention Center. During the call, Yu Wensheng's wife observed that his health had dramatically deteriorated. Three of his teeth had been removed, and his right arm is weak due to nerve damage which makes it impossible for him to write.

Yu's family and friends believe that his conviction is related to an open letter in which he criticized President Xi Jinping as ill-suited to lead China due to his strengthening "totalitarian" rule over the country.

Yu Wensheng's wife Xu Yan has been tirelessly fighting for the release of her husband in the past three years. Xu made numerous attempts to visit her husband, who has been detained 800km away from their home in Beijing. Xu Yan has been under constant surveillance and harassment by the authorities since she started to advocate for her husband. She has been summoned, detained and banned from travelling.

TAKE ACTION

1. Write a letter to one or both government officials listed by March 20, 2021, calling on the authorities to:

- ensure that Yu Wensheng has access to adequate food, health care and prompt access to medical attention;
- ensure Yu Wensheng has regular, unrestricted access to a lawyer of his choice and his family and while in detention, he is not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment; and
- release Yu Wensheng immediately and unconditionally, as he is imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising his human right to freedom of expression.

2. Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 19.18. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Director Yin Zhaoming

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Urgent Action: Russia

Aleksei Navalny Given Prison Sentence

On February 2nd, a court in Russia ruled to imprison prominent anti-corruption and opposition activist for two years and eight months for “violation of probation terms”. Tens of thousands join regular protests in his support, and thousands have been arbitrarily detained and subjected to ill-treatment. Aleksei Navalny must be freed immediately and unconditionally.

Aleksei Navalny is a Russian politician and anti-corruption activist. He is one of the most prominent critics of the Russian authorities and the founder of the Anti-Corruption Foundation (known as FBK in Russian), which has conducted investigations into corruption among Russia’s senior officials and prominent politicians and businesspeople. Aleksei Navalny as well as many FBK employees and associates have faced reprisals for their work including fabricated criminal and administrative charges, police raids and house search, physical violence and selective army conscription.

In 2014, Aleksei Navalny was found guilty under politically motivated charges of fraud and sentenced to three and a half years on probation. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) later ruled that the sentence was “arbitrary and manifestly unreasonable” (Navalny v. Russia, no. 101/15, §83, 5 March 2018) and that by keeping Aleksei Navalny under house arrest for 10 months prior to the sentencing Russian authorities pursued an “ulterior purpose”, namely “to suppress political pluralism” (Navalny v. Russia (No. 2), §98, no. 43734/14). The Russian Supreme Court ordered a retrial, which failed to address human rights violations pinpointed by the ECtHR and upheld the initial conviction and sentence.

August 20th, 2020, Aleksei Navalny fell seriously ill during a flight from Tomsk (Siberia) to Moscow. On 22 August 22nd, on his family’s insistence and after a vigorous domestic and international campaign, Aleksei Navalny was transferred for treatment to Berlin, Germany, in a comatose state. Vladimir Putin subsequently claimed that he had personally intervened to authorise his transfer. Aleksei Navalny gradually recovered in Germany and was discharged from the hospital to continue his rehabilitation.

Experts from several countries concluded that Aleksei Navalny had been poisoned with the nerve agent Novichok. In spite of this and of Aleksei Navalny’s representatives’ relentless attempts to have a criminal



investigation into his alleged poisoning opened, the Russian authorities have consistently refused to do so and to recognise this diagnosis. Independent investigative group Bellingcat has published their findings suggesting that Aleksei Navalny could have been poisoned by agents of the Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB).

In December 2020, while Navalny was recovering from the poisoning, a new criminal case was opened accusing him of “embezzling” donations from his supporters. Simultaneously, the Federal Penal Service (FSIN) claimed that Aleksei Navalny was violating the terms by not reporting to the penitentiary authorities. FSIN requested that his probation be replaced with an actual prison term of three and a half years.

On January 17th, Aleksei Navalny flew to Moscow where he was arrested at the border control. Massive, overwhelmingly peaceful, protests against his arrest took place across Russia in January and February during which more than 11,000 people were arbitrarily arrested, often violently. Hundreds of peaceful protesters were put under “administrative arrest” following unfair trials and held in conditions that amounted to torture or other ill-treatment. A number



of Aleksei Navalny's associates and high-profile supporters, as well as ordinary demonstrators, are also facing trumped-up criminal charges related to the protests.

On February 2nd, a court in Moscow granted FSIN's motion and ruled to imprison Aleksei Navalny for 2 years and 8 months (taking into consideration his pre-trial house arrest).

Sample Letter

Dear President Putin

I am writing to you concerning politician and anti-corruption activist Aleksei Navalny who was arrested on January 17th, 2021 and sent to prison for two years and eight months for purported "violation of [his] probation terms".

Aleksei Navalny has been arbitrarily deprived of his liberty. His imprisonment for this purported "violation" is politically motivated and seeks to silence him and end his peaceful activism. It relates to a past conviction which the European Court of Human Rights has found to be "arbitrary and manifestly unreasonable" and intended to "suppress political pluralism". As you are aware, the "violation" consisted in Aleksei Navalny's failure to report regularly to a probation officer, as part of his non-custodial sentence, which he could not do while he was receiving life-saving treatment abroad following his poisoning in Russia.

Aleksei Navalny is a prominent and vocal government critic. Like many others in Russia, he has been arbitrarily deprived of his liberty for his peaceful political activism and for exercising his right to freedom of expression. He is a prisoner of conscience and must be released immediately and unconditionally.

I urge you to use your authority to take necessary steps to ensure Aleksei Navalny's immediate and unconditional release, and an end to reprisals against, and persecution of, all other government critics.

Yours sincerely,

TAKE ACTION

1. Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
2. Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 6.21. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin
President of the Russian Federation
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Russian Federation

Online form: <http://en.letters.kremlin.ru>

Twitter: @KremlinRussia

Salutation: Dear President Putin,

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Instagram: @RusEmbUSA

Salutation: Dear Ambassador

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS
POSSIBLE UNTIL: April 1st, 2021

UN Security Council Must Hold Military Accountable in Myanmar

February 2, 2021 -- Ahead of the UN Security Council's emergency closed meeting on Myanmar today, Amnesty International's Deputy Director of Advocacy Sherine Tadros said:

“What we are witnessing in Myanmar didn't just suddenly happen. You cannot leave perpetrators of grave crimes under international law on the loose and then act surprised when they trample human rights again.

“Yesterday, an emboldened military took years of international inaction as a quiet signal that they could oust the civilian government and embark on a spree of baseless arrests without any real consequences.

“Will Security Council members continue to only talk to each other, and behind closed doors, or finally act firmly to prevent further rights violations and the very real threat of a worsening human rights crisis? Had the Security Council acted decisively and strongly from day one, we might not be in a situation where the lives and liberty of people across Myanmar are now at even greater risk.

“As we have said before, the Security Council must impose targeted financial sanctions against Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and other military leaders responsible for atrocity crimes against various ethnic minorities across the country, including the Rohingya. The Security Council must also impose a comprehensive global arms embargo on Myanmar, and crucially, refer the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court.

“This is a critical time requiring immediate action from the Security Council, including holding an open session on Myanmar and unequivocally condemning the arrests and other human rights violations by the military. Finally, the Council must demand the immediate release of all those detained in Monday's raids, if they are not promptly charged with a crime recognized under international law.”

The UN Security Council will hold an emergency closed meeting on Myanmar on Tuesday, February 2 at 10am EST in response to yesterday's coup in Myanmar.

Since yesterday the military has imposed a state of emergency under the authority of the Commander-in-Chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and has detained scores of elected civilian officials, other senior political figures as well as political activists and human rights defenders. Telecommunications blackouts have

been imposed in parts of the country.

In a 2018 report, Amnesty International named Senior General Min Aung Hlaing among those responsible for crimes against humanity perpetrated as part of a widespread and systematic attack against the Rohingya population in northern Rakhine State.

Last year the military continued to commit serious human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes, against ethnic minority groups in Chin, Kachin, Rakhine and Shan States while eluding accountability. Amnesty uncovered evidence of indiscriminate air strikes that killed children, as well as torture and arbitrary detention.

A UN Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar in 2018 has called for Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to be investigated and prosecuted for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

How Quickly We Welcome New Neighbors Will Decide How Bright Our Future Can Be

February 4, 2021--Responding to executive actions by President Joe Biden today on restarting the U.S. Refugee Admissions program, Bob Goodfellow, the Interim Executive Director of Amnesty International USA said:

“The question today before a new administration and a reorganized Congress is not whether refugees make this country better, which they do, or whether the United States is living up to its historical welcome of refugees, which it is not: it is about the lives, well-being, and human rights of people around the world and about our shared future together. How quickly and how comprehensively we are able to welcome our new neighbors will decide just how bright our future can be.

“The U.S. government should invest in our shared future including through humanitarian programs, family reunification, a private sponsorship model, and expanded community involvement in resettlement through robust promotion of other community sponsorship programs. The United States must take the first step forward together through acceptance of UN High Commissioner for Refugees referrals, request additional funds from Congress to allow for increased refugee admissions, and provide financial support to international organizations working to address refugees' needs and rights.”

Urgent Action: Iran Jailed Iranian Kurdish Woman Tortured

NAME AND PRONOUN:
Zeynab Jalalian (she/her)

Ministry of Intelligence agents are torturing Iranian Kurdish woman Zeynab Jalalian by deliberately denying her health care to coerce her into providing a videotaped “confession”. This intentional denial of health care is causing her severe pain and suffering, particularly as she has serious medical conditions, including post-Covid-19 breathing difficulty.

On April 29th, 2020, Ministry of Intelligence agents took Zeynab Jalalian out of Khoy prison, West Azerbaijan province, which is located in the same province as her family home and where she had been jailed for a number of years. The following day, she was admitted to Shahr-e Rey prison in Varamin, outside of Tehran. In a phone call to her family in early June 2020, Zeynab Jalalian said she had begun to experience shortness of breath and had subsequently tested positive for COVID-19 at the prison’s medical clinic. She has said that prison officials told her that the ministry of intelligence had barred her transfer to a hospital outside of prison.

On June 8th, 2020, Zeynab Jalalian was eventually transferred to a hospital outside of prison and examined for COVID-19, including with a scan of her lungs, and returned to prison. She later said that the hospital doctor again confirmed her COVID-19 diagnosis and told her scans showed cloudy spots on her lungs. The same month, interrogators from the ministry of intelligence visited Zeynab Jalalian in prison and told her that unless she makes videotaped “confessions” repenting and agrees to work with them, they will continue to deny her access to health care and keep her jailed far from her family home.

On June 20th, 2020, Zeynab Jalalian began a hunger strike in protest at her continued detention in Shahr-e Rey prison, asking to be transferred to Khoy prison or to Tehran’s Evin prison, and against the denial of health care. On 25 June 2020, she was transferred to Kerman prison, Kerman province, where she was subsequently held in prolonged solitary confinement for nearly three months, and denied contact with her family until July 28th, 2020, when she was permitted a short phone call. During this call, which took place in the presence of interrogators, she said the interrogators instructed her speak to her family in Persian and not in Kurdish, her mother tongue.

She also reported that interrogators said they transferred her to Kerman prison because she was in contact with human rights organizations abroad.

On September 22nd, 2020, Zeynab Jalalian was suddenly transferred to Kermanshah prison, Kermanshah province. In a telephone call to her family from Kermanshah prison, she reported a continued cough, respiratory difficulties and an eye inflammation related to her eye condition.

On 10 November 2020, she telephoned her family from Yazd prison, Yazd province. Zeynab Jalalian has described the transfers themselves as a type of “mental torture”; each prison transfer has meant adjusting to new prison guards, prisoners and systems. Zeynab Jalalian also added that she has not been able to take all her personal possessions with her during the transfers.

Zeynab Jalalian was arbitrarily 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 sentenced to death in early 2009 on the charge of “enmity against God” (moharebeh). 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.

In May 2019, her lawyer Amirsalar Davoudi, was sentenced to a lengthy prison term in relation to his human rights work and Zeynab Jalalian has had no lawyer since, and her family is left to follow up on her

case, including requesting her transfer for treatment to outside clinics, without legal guidance. Their ability to do so is further undermined by restrictions introduced to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and by her transfer to different prisons far away from their residence.

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.

Sample Letter

Dear Mr. Raisi,

Since 29 April 2020, as prisons across Iran experienced outbreaks of COVID-19, Ministry of Intelligence agents have transferred Iranian Kurdish woman Zeynab Jalalian to four different prisons across the country and, in violation of the absolute prohibition against torture and other ill-treatment, held her in prolonged solitary confinement and deliberately denied her access to adequate health care. The Ministry of Intelligence is conditioning access to adequate health care, transfer to a prison closer to her family home in West Azerbaijan province and an end of reprisals against Zeynab Jalalian and her family on her “confessing” to wrongdoing and expressing remorse for her past political activities on camera and agreeing to work with the Ministry of Intelligence. Zeynab Jalalian has been intentionally denied transfer to outside facilities for medical treatment unavailable in prison for over six years. Only once in 2020, she was briefly provided health care outside of prison in June after testing positive for COVID-19. She has had no further adequate access to health care, including for a post COVID-19 respiratory condition and for a serious eye condition.

On November 29th, 2020, Ali Jalalian, Zeynab Jalalian’s father, was arrested by Ministry of Intelligence officials and interrogated about speaking about his daughter with human rights organizations and media outside of Iran; he was released on bail a day later. Zeynab Jalalian is serving a life sentence in Yazd prison, 1,400 km away from her family home, following a grossly unfair trial in December 2008 that lasted a few minutes without her lawyer present.

I call on you to immediately release Zeynab Jalalian by implementing the recommendation of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which calls for her to be released immediately and accorded an enforceable right to compensation. Pending her release, she must be provided with adequate health care, including transfer to outside facilities for treatment unavailable in prison and protected from further torture and other ill-treatment. I call on you to order a prompt, independent, effective and impartial investigation into her allegations of torture and other ill-treatment.

Yours sincerely,

TAKE ACTION:

1. Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to the government official listed below. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.

2. Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 151.14. It’s important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Head of Judiciary, Ebrahim Raisi

c/o H.E. Majid Takht Ravanchi
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PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS
POSSIBLE UNTIL: March 29th, 2021

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.