



December 1, 2008

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi
Office of the Head of the Judiciary
Pasteur Street, Vali Asr Avenue
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Your Excellency:

We are writing out of deep concern for the well-being of two internationally respected Iranian physicians, Drs. Arash Alaei and Kamiar Alaei, who have been detained without charge following their arrest by Iranian authorities in June. The Alaei doctors' work on HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment has saved lives and has earned Iran international recognition as a model of best-practice.

As international medical leaders and policy makers, we appeal to your government to release these doctors immediately. As the globe celebrates World AIDS Day, it is crucial that these two pioneers from the field of HIV/AIDS prevention be free to practice life-saving medicine in Iran.

Dr. Kamiar Alaei is a doctoral candidate at the SUNY Albany School of Public Health in Albany, New York and was expected to resume his studies there this fall. In 2007, he received Master of Science in Population and International Health from the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston, Massachusetts.

His brother, Dr. Arash Alaei, is the former Director of the International Education and Research Cooperation of the Iranian National Research Institute of Tuberculosis and Lung Disease. Since 1998, Dr. Arash Alaei and Dr. Kamiar Alaei have been carrying out HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention programs, particularly focused on harm reduction for injecting drug users.

In addition to their work in Iran, the Alaei brothers have held training courses for Afghan and Tajik medical workers and have worked to encourage regional cooperation among 12 Middle Eastern and Central Asian countries. They were key organizers of a tri-national meeting in 2004 in Tehran to discuss harm reduction and substitution treatment in Iran, Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Their efforts expanded the expertise of doctors in the region, advanced the progress of medical science, and earned Iran recognition as a model of best practice by the World Health Organization. Sharing knowledge across borders for the better treatment of diseases is not a crime, it is good medicine.

A number of journalists, academics and Muslim advocates raised the Alaeis' case with President Ahmadinejad during his September 2008 visit to the UN, and a vigil for their release was held by a group of medical colleagues in New York. More than three thousand health professionals and concerned citizens have appealed to Iranian authorities for the release of these compassionate and caring physicians. We urge the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to end the Alaeis' unjust detention immediately. Each day they are in prison is another day Iranian patients suffer from the absence of two great medical minds.

Sincerely,

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MacArthur Foundation Genius Grant recipient 2006
Surgeon, Brigham and Women's Hospital
Assoc. Professor, Harvard Medical School
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