

## **Statement of Babak Namazi**

Son of Baquer Namazi and Brother of Siamak Namazi

Press Briefing

October 4, 2021

Thank you all for joining the briefing today.

In the past several weeks, my family's worst fears have come to a head. As Jared will describe in more detail, we recently learned that the blockage in the main arteries to my father's brain has risen drastically. New scans revealed that there is now a 95-97% blockage in one of the arteries. Although we had previously held off on moving forward with surgery to address the blockage due to the significant risks associated with performing the operation in Iran, that is no longer an option. Multiple neurologists have advised my father to immediately undergo surgery to avoid a potentially fatal stroke. Given that Iranian authorities refuse to lift the travel ban on him, he will be forced to risk his life to undergo surgery in Iran in a matter of days.

My family is devastated. Since my father's arrest, we have lived every day with the fear that it could be his last. Watching his detention in Evin Prison from afar while he underwent hospitalizations and emergency surgeries was a type of torture I would not wish upon my worst enemy. However, to feel so close to a resolution, to have my father's case closed and to finally allow ourselves to hope that the nightmare could be ending only to learn of this new development is a particularly cruel pain.

This is not and never has been the ending my father deserves.

My father is a selfless individual who spent his life in public service. As a UNICEF representative for over a decade, he dedicated himself wholly to helping the world's most vulnerable populations. Even in his retirement, he continued serving others, including facilitating natural disaster aid.

And when he wasn't involved in humanitarian efforts, he poured himself wholeheartedly into the role he viewed as most important in his life – being a grandparent. My dad loves my son and daughter. Like any grandparent, his greatest joy prior to his arrest was to dote on them. Even with all the medical crises and horrific treatment that my father has endured since February 2016, I believe what has broken him most is the separation from his grandchildren, who have not been able to see him for 5.5 years now. He has been robbed of so much: birthdays, graduations, college acceptances, holidays – all the milestones he had been so excited to celebrate with them. I know that it shatters his heart that these are not memories he can share with them, and although my children do their best to stay strong, I know that it has pained them deeply not to have their grandpa by their side in these critical moments.

My father has already lost so much precious time. I am begging Iran to let him spend whatever small amount of time he has left with his family, my brother Siamak included. My

brother's detention hangs heavily on my father at all times. As a father myself, I cannot imagine the helplessness and agony he feels living every parent's worst fear: not being able to protect their child from suffering. Therefore, I am pleading with Iran to release both my brother and father immediately. Our family has suffered enough.

I call on the international community to do everything in its power to bring my family home. I urge President Biden specifically to apply whatever pressure he can to the Iranian government to make them lift the travel ban so that my father can receive the lifesaving care he needs. And due to my father's long history with UNICEF, I similarly request that Secretary-General Guterres and other United Nations officials join in these efforts and urgently reach out to Iran to push for his freedom.

My father has endured so much. Years in prison, multiple heart surgeries in prison, not seeing his grandchildren, his son being held captive, and failing health. How much more must an 85-year-old man endure before the government of Iran relents its cruel treatment and allows my father to leave to get the medical attention he needs?

Thank you all again for joining. My family is incredibly grateful for your continued support and coverage of my father and brother's stories.