

AMERICAN HOSTAGE SIAMAK NAMAZI DENIED FURLough AMID CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

Washington, D.C. – Iran’s judiciary has denied the furlough request of Siamak Namazi, the American Iranian hostage held in Evin Prison, despite a serious risk of him contracting coronavirus.

Siamak requested furlough earlier this month due to the outbreak of coronavirus in Iran, including in Evin Prison. Siamak’s fear materialized after learning that another prisoner in his ward, who slept just several cells down the same hallway, tested positive for coronavirus a few weeks ago. To make matters worse, only a few days ago, he learned that another case of coronavirus was confirmed in the same hallway. Iran continues to suffer one of the largest and deadliest outbreaks in the world and the overcrowding, lack of basic hygiene, and ill-equipped medical facilities make Evin Prison ripe for a devastating outbreak. Already, another hostage, British Iranian Anoosheh Ashoori, stated a few days ago in a recorded call to his wife that the current situation in Evin “is chaos and I cannot explain how bad [it] is... It needs international attention.”

Siamak’s request was also driven by Iran’s efforts to stem the spread of coronavirus by releasing tens of thousands of prisoners. However, as Iranian officials continue to grant furloughs to legitimate criminals, they have refused to do the same for Siamak and other hostages, despite pleas from their families, the U.S. Government, and rights groups like Human Rights Watch.

Siamak’s family was devastated by the news. Babak Namazi, Siamak’s brother, stated: “We are horrified by the judiciary’s arbitrary decision to keep Siamak exposed to the coronavirus in Evin Prison while it has released over 70,000 other prisoners and continues to release more. It is outrageous that even now, under such dangerous conditions, Iran refuses to show the basic humanity and decency it has so vociferously demanded from others and instead continues to inflict senseless suffering upon my family. I implore the authorities to reconsider and show compassion. Today we must remind ourselves of our humanity.”

“Containing this global crisis should far outweigh the arbitrary and politicized process of hostage-taking; yet, the regime has proven once again that it values its draconian political games over human lives,” said Jared Genser, the Namazi family’s pro bono counsel. “We demand that Iranian authorities reverse their decision immediately and grant Siamak a furlough to allow him to safely self-quarantine. If there were ever a time for a humanitarian gesture by the regime, it is now. Otherwise, the judiciary and prosecutors’ office shall be responsible for any harm that comes to Siamak under such grave circumstances.”

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