

Freedom for Fariba Adelkhah and Roland Marchal, academic prisoners in Iran, 11/02/2020

Fariba Adelkhah and Roland Marchal, two researchers affiliated to the Centre for International Studies (CERI) in Paris, have been in an Iranian prison since June 5, 2019. Alongside fifteen other foreign academics, they have been accused of political crimes: undermining national security, propaganda against the regime and spying.

Iran's justice system has itself acknowledged the arbitrary nature of the allegations. In December a court ordered their conditional release and in January espionage charges against Fariba Adelkhah were dropped. Yet it is not justice, but Iran's Revolutionary Guards who determine their fate and harsh conditions of detention.

On 24 December Fariba Adelkhah began a hunger strike. With Kylie Moore-Gilbert, an Australian-British academic incarcerated since 2018, she refused food in defence of legal rights and academic freedom throughout the Middle East. Their pleas have successfully highlighted the plight of all academic prisoners. After six weeks of starvation, Fariba Adelkhah's health is now in a critical condition.

Despite international publicity and outcry, the academics face acute danger. Fariba Adelkhah and Roland Marchal may soon be brought before Tehran's Revolutionary Tribunal. There are strong reasons to believe that this trial will not be impartial.

The 'shadow power' of the Revolutionary Guards ultimately rests, constitutionally, on the Supreme Guide of the Revolution. This is why we formally address him, on this Tuesday 11th of February, the day commemorating the 1979 revolution, to ask him to save the Islamic Republic from the shame of injustice by ordering the Revolutionary Guards to free Fariba Adelkhah and Roland Marchal and all others unjustly detained.

From the depths of Evin prison, Fariba Adelkhah poignantly has called upon us to "save researchers, in order to save research and preserve our history". This appeal concerns not only the Islamic Republic and the whole Middle East, but academics throughout the world. For there will be no free and fair society without academic freedom.