

# REDRESS

Ending Torture, Seeking Justice for Survivors

## NAZANIN ZAGHARI-RATCLIFFE CASE

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe is a British-Iranian dual national who lives in London with her husband Richard and their baby daughter Gabriella. On 3 April 2016, Nazanin was returning from visiting family in Iran with then 21-month-old Gabriella, when she was arrested at the airport by Iran's Revolutionary Guard (IRGC) on 3 April 2016. No reason was given for her arrest.

Following a secret and unfair trial in August 2016, Nazanin was sentenced to five years in prison on unspecified charges relating to national security. She was only given access to her lawyer the day before the court session, who was later given just five minutes to defend her. This was repeated in the appeals process. Nazanin remains in Evin prison on unspecified charges, separated from her now three-year-old daughter and her husband in the UK. She is currently allowed to see her daughter during weekly visits to the prison.



In total, Nazanin spent eight and a half months in solitary confinement. She has been held in inhumane conditions, in cells without windows, natural air or light and measuring around 1.5m by 2m in size. Iranian authorities have placed significant psychological pressure on Nazanin regarding her long separation from her daughter Gabriella. For example, Iranian guards have threatened to send her daughter back to the United Kingdom, have taunted Nazanin by playing with her daughter in front of her and interacted with their own children in front of her and other women prisoners.

Her treatment has had an extremely severe impact on Nazanin's mental and physical health, which have caused at times, among other things, her inability to walk and use her arms and hands, severe weight and hair loss, blackouts, panic attacks, post-traumatic stress disorder, advanced depression and suicidal tendencies.

In October 2017, Nazanin was informed of three fresh charges and that she could face an additional 16 years in prison. The charges were apparently linked to her charity work in the UK. Her family were required to pay bail money to prevent her from being returned to solitary confinement. On 23 November, Iranian authorities further informed her that she would appear in court on 10 December on a charge of "spreading propaganda." The court date was later postponed in the wake of the UK Foreign Secretary's visit to the country, although Nazanin never received formal notification. On 3 February, the Iranian judiciary informed Nazanin that the case was closed.

REDRESS filed a complaint to the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention on 17 June 2016 who deemed her detention as a violation of her most basic fundamental rights. This was followed by six UN experts calling for her release, which was re-iterated in October 2017. At the time of writing Nazanin remains arbitrarily detained and does not receive UK consular visits as Iran does not recognise her dual nationality.

More information about Nazanin's case is available [here](#).

Please also see our new report [Beyond Discretion: the protection of British nationals abroad](#).

February 2018

## TORTURE IN DETENTION IN IRAN

The United Nations and human rights organisations have highlighted serious concerns about the widespread use of torture and ill-treatment in Iran, in particular in the context of detention, where it is frequently used to extract confessions.

In 2017, [the UN Special Rapporteur on Iran noted](#) that in addition to a wide range of forms of physical torture, Iranian authorities resort to prolonged periods of solitary confinement, as well as the denial of access to proper and necessary medical treatment for detainees and family visits. According to the Special Rapporteur, there have been “numerous reports and instances in which prisoners were deprived of family visits and or medical care.”

A report from Freedom from Torture from 2017, [Turning A Blind Eye: why the international community must no longer ignore torture in Iran](#), examined forensic evidence of 69 Iranian torture survivors examined by Freedom from Torture since 2015. These reports document alarming levels of torture and abuse perpetrated by the Iranian government between 1985 and 2015.

Torture methods identified in the report included appalling physical abuses, from beatings and stress positions to electric shocks and cutting with knives, as well as high levels of sexual violence perpetrated against men and women, including rape. A distinctive feature of torture in Iran is the sophisticated use of psychological torture, including humiliating treatment, extended use of solitary confinement, and threats or harassment directed at torture survivors and their families. This appears to be an effort to destroy not just individuals but societal structures and trust in order to maintain control.

## EVIN PRISON

Evin Prison is a large complex in Tehran known in Iran and around the world for being a symbol of Iran’s political repression. It has held and continues to hold hundreds of peaceful activists, intellectuals, journalists, and human rights lawyers.

[Research by Amnesty International](#) and other human rights organizations over the years describe inhumane and unsanitary conditions at Evin Prison. Among the most common complaints are chronic overcrowding, severely limited hot water, poor ventilation, and infestations of cockroaches and mice, particularly near kitchen areas.

According to Amnesty International, prisoners have described being forced to sleep on the floor, including during cold winter months due to a shortage of beds and being fed “barely edible” meals. Dozens of prisoners jailed in Evin in the past several years have conducted hunger strikes to protest what they have described as poor conditions and mistreatment or abuse by guards.

In July 2017 Iran’s hard-line conservative judiciary organised a visit to Evin prison attended by representatives of 45 diplomatic missions from countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa, [but human rights groups and Iranian activists criticised](#) the fact that some sections of the prison, where prisoners may have been abused, remained off limits to the diplomats.