

As Muslim medical leaders, we are writing to urge the Iranian government to immediately release and drop all charges against the Drs. Kamiar and Arash Alaei, internationally renowned HIV/AIDS physicians, so that they can continue to improve public health for the people of Iran.

In our faith, a Muslim doctor believes that “for each disease there is a cure; and when the treatment is given, the disease is cured by the Will of Allah” (Reported by Ahmad and Muslim). Both Kamiar and Arash Alaei have worked tirelessly to fight HIV/AIDS, and their efforts have advanced the prevention, care and treatment of this devastating epidemic. Not only have the Alaei brothers treated people living with AIDS in Iran, but they have also expanded the expertise of doctors in 12 Middle Eastern and Central Asian countries through training courses for medical personnel. Their work has helped earn Iran recognition as a model of best practice by the World Health Organization. Through their pursuit and exchange of knowledge of HIV/AIDS, they are working to fight a disease that can only be fought on a global scale, through cooperation, exchange of knowledge and public health diplomacy across borders.

However, the Iranian government has misconstrued the public health work of the Alaei brothers as espionage. In December 2008, Drs. Kamiar and Arash Alaei were tried on charges of communicating with an "enemy government," as well as additional secret charges that their attorney had no opportunity to examine or refute. The government used their travel to international conferences as a basis for this charge—a dangerous conflation of public health diplomacy with treason that will harm Iran’s ability to be a worldwide medical leader and protect its people from disease and death.

The Qu’ran states “anyone who has saved a life, it is as if he has saved the life of all mankind” (Surah 5:32). As followers of the Islamic faith, we want to remind the Iranian government of the fairness and justice that is set forth in the Qu’ran. We urge Iran to act justly by granting Drs. Kamiar and Arash Alaei their appeal and releasing the doctors immediately.

The continued imprisonment of Drs. Kamiar and Arash Alaei is not only detrimental to public health in Iran, but also has a negative impact on the international medical community and the fight against HIV/AIDS. To fight HIV/AIDS, a disease that has no borders, there must be exchange of knowledge across borders.

As members of the Muslim community, we hope Iran will remember the important role of the Muslim doctor as an agent of healing. I urge the Iranian government to free Drs. Kamiar and Arash Alaei immediately so that the brothers can continue their life-saving work for the benefit of all mankind.

Signed by:

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