

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

October 4, 2021

### **AMERICAN HOSTAGE IN IRAN BAQUER NAMAZI REQUIRES URGENT SURGERY TO CLEAR LIFE-THREATENING BLOCKAGE TO MAIN ARTERY TO HIS BRAIN**

#### **IRAN'S ARBITRARY REFUSAL TO LET HIM LEAVE POSES GRAVE AND IMMEDIATE RISK TO HIS LIFE**

*There is now a 95-97% blockage of his right carotid artery and he requires surgery in the next 7-10 days due to the severe risk of having a potentially fatal stroke.*

Washington, D.C. – Today, the family of American hostages Baquer and Siamak Namazi issued a desperate public call to President Joe Biden and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to demand Iran let Baquer leave. In addition, their international legal team filed an [urgent action appeal](#) to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Physical and Mental Health, Tlaleng Mofokeng, in response to new, life-threatening developments in Baquer Namazi's health.

Baquer and Siamak have been held hostage by Iran for nearly six years, having been arrested in February 2016 and October 2015 respectively. The father and son were convicted of “collaboration with a hostile government” – the United States – and sentenced to ten years in prison. While Siamak remains in Evin Prison, Baquer, now almost 85-years-old, was placed on a highly restrictive medical furlough in 2018 due to severe health concerns. In early 2020, he was informed that the Iranian Revolutionary Courts had commuted his sentence to time served and it released the bail he had posted to be released on the medical furlough. Despite his desperate need to travel abroad for medical care, Iranian authorities have kept him under an arbitrary international travel ban.

As a result, Baquer's medical situation is now dire and life-threatening. New scans have just revealed that blockage in the main arteries to his brain, previously found in 2019, have drastically increased. There is now a 95–97% blockage in his right internal carotid artery (ICA) – one of a pair of arteries that supply blood to the brain – as well as significant blockage in the surrounding arteries and veins. Multiple neurologists both in Iran and abroad have advised Baquer to undergo a carotid endarterectomy to remove the blockage as soon as possible – within the next 7 to 10 days at most – due to his severe risk of having a potentially fatal stroke.

**Through consultations with multiple neurologists in Iran and the United States, if Baquer is forced to undergo this surgery in Iran, his risk of death, stroke, or heart attack may be 10%-15% or higher.** As can be seen from this [study](#) of more than 4,000 patients in the United States who underwent this surgery in normal conditions, for someone 85-years-old, that risk was 5.6%.

The reason the risk is much higher in Iran is because its hospitals have been [overrun](#) with COVID-19 patients, exhausting medical staff and depleting medical resources. Baquer would

therefore face a serious risk of contracting the disease during surgery and recovery, which in his fragile state could have severe consequences. In addition, undergoing surgery in Iran poses a danger to Baquer's health as the procedure requires a stress-free environment for proper recovery. If Iranian authorities do not lift the travel restrictions immediately, Baquer will be forced to proceed with the surgery in Iran despite these grave concerns.

As detailed in the appeal, the United Nations has emphasized that freedom of movement is an "integral component[] of the right to health." Given that undergoing the surgery in Iran poses a significant threat to Baquer's life and that Iranian authorities lack any domestic or international legal basis to hold him there, the international travel ban is a gross violation of Baquer's right to the highest attainable standard of health. Further, if Baquer dies while waiting for, undergoing, or recovering from surgery while in Iran, his death will constitute an illegal deprivation of life by the Government of Iran, which is defined as involving "an intentional or otherwise foreseeable and preventable life-terminating harm or injury, caused by an act or omission." The Namazis' international legal team has accordingly requested that Ms. Mofokeng urgently reach out to Iran and demand that it lift the travel ban to allow Baquer to seek the lifesaving care he needs.

Babak Namazi, Baquer's son and Siamak's brother said:

"My grief in this moment is difficult to put into words. It has been an indescribable nightmare to helplessly watch from afar as my father's health has deteriorated and now, it seems more likely than ever that each phone call I have with him will be the last. I am begging for Iran to show mercy and for the international community, President Joe Biden, and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to do everything that they can to pressure Iran to lift the travel ban. My dad deserves to spend whatever little time he has left with his children and grandchildren."

Jared Genser, who serves as pro bono counsel to the Namazis, stated the following:

"Iran's treatment of Baquer Namazi is an intentional decision that shocks the conscience. Through its decision to maintain this international travel ban since February 2020, the Iranian government is solely responsible for Baquer's current condition, and if it does not immediately reverse that decision, the results could be fatal. I call on the Government of Iran to immediately allow Baquer to travel abroad so that he can receive the lifesaving care he so desperately needs."

Previously, Secretary-General Guterres has raised the plight of Baquer Namazi with senior Iranian officials and urged them to allow him to travel abroad to receive medical treatment, because he retired from the United Nations after decades working as a senior official with UNICEF.

In addition to highlighting the urgency of Baquer's current situation, the appeal details Iran's long history of violations against both of the Namazis' right to health. Years of this treatment have had dire consequences on the Namazis' physical and mental wellbeing. Siamak has been repeatedly exposed to COVID-19, developed severe depression, and suffers from chronic problems with his left shoulder, right leg, left ear, and teeth. Baquer has numerous additional health issues outside of the blockages. As a result of his traumatic experiences in prison, he

developed adult-onset stress-induced epilepsy and severe depression. He is also easily fatigued, often confused, and has difficulty moving, which has resulted in multiple falls.

###

**Contact:**

Jared Genser  
jgenser@perseus-strategies.com  
+1 202 320 4235