



# OPEN LETTER

PROTECTING TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS WORLDWIDE



July 2022

H.E. Ayatollah Ali Hosseini Khamenei  
Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran  
Office of the Supreme Leader  
Islamic Republic Street  
End of Shahid Keshvar Doust Street  
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran



**Re: Interpreters Anisha Asadollahi and Keyvan Mohtadi**

Your Excellency,



The undersigned representatives of the world language community, together with their academic and humanitarian partners, are gravely concerned that on May 9, 2022, Anisha Asadollahi and Keyvan Mohtadi, both Iranian citizens, were arrested and detained for serving as interpreters for two French nationals, Cécile Kohler and Jacques Paris, who likewise were arrested, in their case for “fomenting unrest.”



Irrespective of the allegations leveled against Ms. Kohler and Mr. Paris, interpreters contracted to provide linguistic services must not be held legally accountable for the content of the communications they are facilitating. Interpreters worldwide are recognized as impartial intermediaries. In arresting and detaining Ms. Asadollahi and Mr. Mohtadi, Iran essentially criminalized the act of interpretation.



Moreover, the right to work in a given profession is a fundamental human right, as recognized in several international legal instruments, among them the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which your country ratified in 1975. Specifically, Article 6(1) of the latter lays down that “The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts, and will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right.” Accordingly, the arrest and detention of the two interpreters constitute a clear violation of this covenant.



We respectfully urge your Excellency to intervene, directing the relevant governmental agencies to honor the rights enshrined in the ICESCR and immediately release Ms. Asadollahi and Mr. Mohtadi.

Sincerely,

Maya Hess, President, Red T  
Jennifer Fearnside-Bitsios, President, International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC)

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Linda Fitchett, Chair, AIIC Conflict Zone Group  
Alison Rodriguez, President, International Federation of Translators (FIT)  
Aurora Humarán, President, International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters (IAPTI)



Angela Sasso, President, Critical Link International (CLI)  
Christopher Stone, President, World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI)  
Bart Defrancq, President, Conférence Internationale Permanente d'Instituts Universitaires de Traducteurs et Interprètes (CIUTI)



Sue-Ann Harding, President, and Cristina Marinetti, Chair of the Executive Council, International Association of Translation and Intercultural Studies (IATIS)  
Lucio Bagnulo, Head of Translation and Language Strategy, Language Resource Centre, International Secretariat, Amnesty International  
Romana Cacchioli, Executive Director, PEN International  
Urtzi Urrutikoetxea, Chair, Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee, PEN International  
Genny Brusegan Conte, President, European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (EFSLI)  
Daniela Perillo, President, European Legal Interpreters and Translators Association (EULITA)  
Lieven Buysse, President, European Network for Public Service Interpreting and Translation (ENPSIT)



Cc:  
H.E. Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran  
The Honorable Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei, Head of the Judiciary of the Islamic Republic of Iran  
H.E. Dr. Majid Takht Ravanchi, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations  
H.E. Dr. Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

