

September 14, 2018

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei
Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran
c/o H.E. Mr. Gholamali Khoshroo
Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
622 Third Avenue, 34th Floor New York, NY 10017, USA
Email: iran@un.int Fax: (212) 867-7086

Your Excellency,

The American Historical Association (AHA) expresses deep concern about the case of PhD student Xiyue Wang of Princeton University's Department of History. Mr. Wang has been serving a 10-year jail sentence since August of 2016. The largest independent organization of professional historians in the world with approximately 12,500 members spanning the globe, the AHA promotes historical scholarship, which requires access to archives and other repositories of information about the past.

Despite holding the proper research permit and visa to conduct archival research in Iran, Mr. Wang has been convicted of "cooperating with foreign states against the Islamic Republic of Iran" and collecting "highly confidential articles" for his doctoral dissertation, which concerns diplomatic relations of the Qajar Dynasty (1789–1924).

Iranian authorities confiscated Mr. Wang's passport on 21 July 2016. On 7 August 2016, he was taken to Evin Prison, where he remains to this day. In April 2017, he was convicted of espionage based merely on his relationship with academic institutions in the United States. In August 2017, the judiciary rejected his appeal. His health has suffered greatly during his imprisonment, and his wife and young child continue to suffer unnecessary anguish and anxiety.

Any charges of espionage against Mr. Wang are groundless. He is a student at a private university and has no associations with any government. No evidence has appeared suggesting Mr. Wang was in Iran for any purpose except researching the diplomacy of the Qajar Dynasty.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which explicitly protects freedom of speech, thought, and opinion. Yet in imprisoning a historian, and infringing his academic freedom, the Islamic Republic of Iran has sanctioned a miscarriage of justice. The time is long past to right this wrong and release Mr. Wang. We join the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the Middle East Studies Association, and Princeton University in calling for the immediate release of Mr. Wang.

Sincerely,



Mary Beth Norton
President