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Your Excellency

I am writing on behalf of the British Medical Association to express grave concerns regarding the conditions in which detainees are held in Raja'i Shahr Prison. According to a deeply troubling recent report by Amnesty International, we understand that detainees are routinely deprived of access to necessary medical care and treatment. Amnesty also reports a culture of complete indifference to medical needs within the prison, a refusal to transfer seriously ill prisoners for critically necessary care, and the routine beating of prisoners. We also understand that prisoners are both poorly nourished and kept in deeply unsanitary conditions inimical to the maintenance of good health.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and is committed to its provisions, including article 12 recognizing "the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health". Additionally, Rule 24 of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) provides that "Prisoners should enjoy the same standards of health care that are available in the community, and should have access to necessary health-care services free of charge without discrimination on the grounds of their legal status".

We therefore respectfully ask you to intervene to prevent the denial of timely and adequate medical care being used as a form of punishment against political prisoners. We also ask that you take immediate steps to protect prisoners at Raja'i Shahr Prison from torture and other ill-treatment, ensuring that they are treated humanely in accordance with international law and standards, including the Nelson Mandela Rules, and allow national and international monitors to conduct inspection visits.

We furthermore call on you to ensure that medical decisions concerning the need for on-going care and observation outside prison and the necessity of release on medical grounds are only taken by the responsible health care professionals and are not overruled or ignored by non-medical authorities.

Yours sincerely
Dr Mark Porter
BMA council chair

