

PRESS RELEASE**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday 6th March 2024, 10am GMT****IRISH CITIZEN YASSER ELJUBOORI RETURNS HOME TO DUBLIN**

Today, Wednesday 6th March 2024, Irish citizen and anti-corruption activist, **Yasser Eljuboori**, has safely returned home to Dublin. Mr Eljuboori landed at Dublin Airport this morning and has now been reunited with his family.

Mr Eljuboori's ordeal began on Monday 26th February 2024, when he was detained by the Iraqi authorities in the early hours of the morning at Baghdad airport when he was intending to return home to Dublin. He learned on Tuesday 27th February 2024 that a complaint had been made against him due to his anti-corruption campaigning, under Article 226 of the Penal Code. Mr Eljuboori was remanded in custody until Thursday 29th February 2024, when he was released on bail by a Baghdad court but his passport and belongings were retained. He was informed that all charges against him had been dropped and that the delay in returning his passport was purely administrative, and after "*two to three days of paperwork*" he could return home. However, on Sunday 3rd March 2024 when Mr Eljuboori attended court to retrieve his passport he was informed that he faced two fresh charges against him, that his passport could not be returned and that he was not free to leave Iraq. Mr Eljuboori returned to court again on Monday 4th March 2024 but the authorities continued to retain his passport and the charges remained active.

On Tuesday 5th March 2024, Mr Eljuboori received his passport and belongings back, and extensive efforts were made to secure his safe return to Dublin. His flight landed in Dublin Airport a short time ago, and Mr Eljuboori is now spending time with his family and recovering from his ordeal.

Mr Eljuboori's wife, Laura Wickham, who has led the *#FreeYasser2024* campaign, has asked that this statement be released on her behalf.

Statement by Laura Wickham, Wednesday 6th March 2024

Speaking this morning, **Laura Wickham** said:

“The past ten days have been a living nightmare for me, but most importantly for Yasser.

I want to thank everyone who has worked so hard to support me and Yasser, and to bring him home to Dublin.

I am very grateful to the Tánaiste, Micheál Martin TD, for all he has done. He showed a personal interest and genuine concern for Yasser’s wellbeing and for our family.

I thank everyone at the Department of Foreign Affairs who have helped so much, particularly the assistance of the Consular Directorate and the staff in the Embassy of Ireland in Jordan; and staff at the European Union Delegation to Iraq.

A very, very special thank you to my spectacular lawyer Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC, who answered the phone to a desperate despairing wife at 1am on Tuesday morning and picked me up with open arms. She led and steered everything. I am so proud to be Irish because of the interventions I have seen, and she is one of our special talents.

Thank you so much to barrister Tatyana Eatwell who worked with Caoilfhionn: she is a beautiful person, as well as being an expert in these desperate situations, and was a calm presence in the storm of this whole ordeal.

I cannot thank my family enough. Johnny, Amy, Sally, Kate and my “Spanish sister,” Marga, my parents, and all our family – they are incredible. They dropped everything and all came on board, doing everything I asked of them, and also things I didn’t know I needed, but they knew. From an endless supply of toasted sandwiches and food for the fridge, to logistical help for me and Yasser, to childcare. I could not have got through this without them.

To our family in Baghdad, we are forever indebted to you for your heroism and support and on the ground. I am also so grateful to our local lawyers in Baghdad.

Sincere thanks to LinkedIn and St Brigid's GNS, Killester who have been very supportive to Yasser and I.

I have had overwhelming support from every corner of the country. I think everyone I ever met in my life has contacted me to offer support and well wishes: people I know from every single stage of my life that I haven't seen in years. It has meant so much and I will never forget it.

And above all, to Yasser; I want to say that I am so happy he's home with me and that this nightmare is over. I'll never again take for granted the normal, everyday things: going for family walks, having TV time, playing with our kids on the ground. The kids are getting their dad back, and our house will have its life and soul again. Welcome home, Yasser."

Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC and Tatyana Eatwell act as international counsel to Ms Wickham and the family.

Laura Wickham, Yasser Eljuboori and their family request privacy at this time. They will not be giving interviews at this time. The family have a small number of photographs which they are releasing with this statement. International counsel are available for interview. Interview requests for the international legal team should be directed to t.eatwell@doughtystreet.co.uk; and any queries for the family should be directed to freeyasser2024@gmail.com.

We ask that media do not direct queries directly to Laura Wickham as she and Mr Eljuboori are reuniting with family today.

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