



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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**UN highlights ongoing targeting and harassment of UK-based journalists**

The UN Special Rapporteur on Iran has highlighted the targeting and harassment of London-based BBC Persian journalists in a report to the UN General Assembly.

**Javid Rehman, the UN Special Rapporteur on Iran**, has reported on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and said:

*"Iranian journalists working for foreign-based news outlets, as well as their relatives in the Islamic Republic of Iran, were subjected to threats and harassment for their coverage. The Iranian judiciary also continues to freeze foreign-based media workers' Iranian assets via a court injunction.*

*"Most disturbingly, Rana Rahimpour, a BBC Persian Service journalist, reportedly received death threats. The Government stated the judicial harassment claims were unfounded and remained unproven."*

The Office of the **United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights** has also raised concerns regarding reprisals for engaging with the UN in a report published on Monday. The Commissioner highlighted that BBC journalists had said they were subjected to *"stigmatization and threats against family members for their statements at the Human Rights Council"*.

On 11 March 2020, the UN noted that: *"Journalists working for the BBC Persian Service and other Farsi-language news outlets outside Iran have faced threats, criminal investigations, unlawful surveillance, freezing of assets, defamation and harassment by Iranian authorities. Several journalists have also been targeted for going public about the harassment and seeking protection from the UN."*

The BBC, NUJ and Doughty Street Chambers continue to engage with the international community and urge the Iranian authorities to cease all action against BBC Persian staff and their families.

**Jamie Angus, Director of the BBC World Service Group**, said: *"We welcome the UN's consistent support for BBC Persian staff and their families and their condemnation of attacks on individuals by the Iranian authorities. We will continue to make our case to the world community until this completely unacceptable harassment ends."*

**Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary**, said: *"This campaign of harassment must stop, our members at the BBC Persian Service and Iran International have been subjected to horrendous intimidation. The Iranian government must recognise that this harassment of individuals and their families is an attack on journalism and on press freedom, no one should have their life threatened because they are doing their job in the public interest."*

**Caoilfhionn Gallagher QC and Jennifer Robinson**, international counsel for the BBC World Service at Doughty Street Chambers, said: *"BBC Persian journalists and their families have long been targeted because of their independent reporting for the BBC about Iran. UN reports this week document the death threats and reprisals that BBC journalists have faced for their work, for speaking out about this persecution and for engaging with the UN. This strikes at the most basic rights of the journalists, including their right to life and security. Too many journalists are killed each year because of their work. It is essential for state accountability and prevention efforts that journalists are able to make complaints to the UN without reprisals or threats. Reprisals against BBC Persian journalists and their families for engaging with the UN is an attack on freedom of expression and the integrity of the UN system. It is significant for the BBC and BBC Persian journalists – and for Iran – that this is being raised at the UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council."*

The public campaign against the harassment was first launched in 2017 in response to the Iranian government starting criminal investigations into the activities of journalists and other staff working for BBC Persian, alleging their work constituted a crime against Iran's national security.

In tandem, the Iranian authorities introduced an injunction to freeze the assets of 152 named individuals – predominantly current and former BBC Persian staff – preventing them from buying, selling or inheriting property in Iran. The vast majority of those named are also UK nationals.

The Iranian authorities have been systematically targeting BBC Persian journalists in the UK, and their families in Iran, since the service launched satellite television in 2009.

**Ends.**