

PRESS RELEASE

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**YASSER ELJUBOORI'S FAMILY FILES URGENT APPEAL WITH UNITED NATIONS
EXPERT ON TORTURE**

Irish citizen Yasser Eljuboori, a renowned anti-corruption activist, has been detained by the Iraqi authorities since Monday 26th February 2024, and he has been denied permission to leave the country to return to his family in Ireland.

Mr Eljuboori's wife, Laura Wickham, has learned that he has been seriously mistreated in detention. It is now known, from information available to his family members and his local legal representatives in Baghdad, that Mr Eljuboori has been beaten, blindfolded, and transported to different locations, making it difficult for family members to locate his whereabouts.

Urgent Appeal to United Nations

Given this new information, Ms Wickham has tonight instructed her international legal representatives, Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC and Tatyana Eatwell, to file an urgent appeal with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture. The urgent appeal calls for the United Nations to take action to protect and safeguard Mr Eljuboori. It is based upon the information received regarding Mr Eljuboori's treatment since his arrest on Monday; and also upon available credible, reliable evidence regarding the use of torture, inhuman and degrading treatment in Iraqi detention facilities. The appeal submits that Mr Eljuboori is at real risk of further ill treatment in detention given the events of the past three days and Iraq's history of ill treatment of prisoners. The appeal refers to prior findings of the United Nations Committee Against Torture, from 2022: the Committee expressed concerns at the widespread use of torture and ill treatment and lack of accountability, especially during the investigation and pre-trial stages, in official and unofficial places of detention in Iraq.¹ According to the United Nations Mission for Iraq and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, torture and other forms of ill treatment are "*a reality in places of detention throughout Iraq*" and allegations of torture and ill treatment of detainees are commonplace.²

Speaking tonight from her home in Balgriffin, Dublin, **Laura Wickham** said:

¹ Committee against Torture, Concluding Observations, Iraq, CAT/C/IRQ/CO/2, 15th June 2022, §12.

² UNAMI and OHCHR, [Human Rights and the Administration of Justice in Iraq: legal conditions and procedural safeguards to prevent torture and ill-treatment](#), August 2021, at p.4 and p.11.

“It has been a living nightmare for me and my family this week. Learning that Yasser had been mistreated made me feel sick to my stomach. We are bringing an urgent appeal to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture to protect Yasser and keep him safe. I hope that the UN Special Rapporteur and the Irish Government will do all they can to ensure the Iraqi authorities do the right thing, and let Yasser come home to his family where he belongs.”

Background

Mr Eljuboori was detained at 2.30am Irish time on Monday 26th February 2024. There was no initial reason given for his detention, and he was not permitted to contact his family. He appeared in court on Tuesday 27th February 2024.

Mr Eljuboori, his family, and his local and international legal teams now understand that Mr Eljuboori has been charged under Article 226 of the Publication Law, under the Iraqi Penal Code. Defamation and libel are criminal offences in Iraq, and Article 226 contains a broadly framed, vague and ill-defined offence of “publicly insulting” any public authority or official, a crime punishable by up to seven years’ imprisonment. Article 226 has been heavily criticised by international free speech and human rights groups, as it has been used to target journalists, human rights defenders and anti-corruption activists. It is understood that the charges against Mr Eljuboori relate to his anti-corruption work and alleged criticism of the Prime Minister on the social media platform, X (formerly twitter).

Given his arrest, detention and treatment, Mr Eljuboori has been on hunger strike since Monday. He is due in court again tomorrow, Thursday 29th February 2024.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. The urgent appeal filed this evening has been filed with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Dr Alice Jill Edwards.
2. More information about the campaign to secure Mr Eljuboori’s freedom and return to Ireland can be found on social media using the hashtag #FreeYasser2024 and the accounts @freeyasser2024.
3. Any press queries should be directed to Freeyasser2024@gmail.com.