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**STATEMENT FROM THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION CEO  
MONIQUE VILLA ON NEW CHARGES AGAINST NAZANIN ZAGHARI-  
RATCLIFFE**

“Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, our colleague at the Thomson Reuters Foundation who has been a political hostage in Iran for 554 days, was subjected yesterday to another mockery of justice by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard who have re-opened her case and added three new charges that carry an additional 16 years in jail. She is currently serving a five-year sentence in Evin jail in Tehran.

These charges are linked to her work at BBC Media Action and at the Thomson Reuters Foundation. The accusation states that her charity work was a screen to overthrow the Iranian regime.

This is a complete invention as the Thomson Reuters Foundation doesn't work in Iran and has no programme or dealings with Iran. We continue to assert that she is 100% innocent and that these ludicrous charges must be dropped immediately, and Nazanin released and reunited with her daughter Gabriella and her husband Richard.

This inhumane treatment is breaking up a young family and has already caused irreparable damage to Nazanin's physical and mental health. What happened yesterday and the description that the family has given is harrowing. Hearing that Nazanin, who we know to be a very strong woman, almost collapsed in court, is another sign of how traumatised she must be now. We are all shocked by this new development and ask the Iranian government to put an end to her torture and the British government to finally intervene to end the ordeal of this British national.

I urge you to read below the full press release of Richard Ratcliffe.

The Thomson Reuters Foundation is hosting a special performance of “Looking for Mummy: Nazanin's Story” by Emi Howell on Tuesday 10 October. [RSVP here.](#)”

***Monique Villa, Thomson Reuters Foundation CEO***



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## **Nazanin taken to Court with new charges, threatened with additional 16 year sentence**

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### **Summary – Nazanin taken to court yesterday**

The Free Nazanin campaign can confirm that yesterday Nazanin was taken to court, and informed that a new case had been opened against her at the insistence of the IRGC. The new charges in this case carry a sentence of 16 additional years imprisonment.

Her family have paid bail to prevent her being put back into solitary.

Nazanin and the rest of her family are bewildered at this turn. Her family are calling on the Iranian Ambassador and UK government to condemn this new abuse of her by the Revolutionary Guard.

***For Quotations see end of press release***

### **New Case Opened Against Nazanin**

Nazanin's new case was reviewed by Judge Ghanaatkar of Branch 33 Court (Sub-Branch 1) inside Evin Prison. (formal name is Shahid Moghadas branch). Judge Ghanaatkar is the Head of Interrogations in Evin Court. This is the same Court and Judge that handled the initial stages of Nazanin's original trial back in August 2016.

The Judge informed Nazanin that they had decided to reopen her case. He had received a new file of 200 pages from the IRGC interrogators. After 19 months imprisonment, he had received three new charges, which amounted to an additional 16 years imprisonment.

He asked her as he questioned her: What is it about you that Sepah (the IRGC) are so resistant to releasing you?

The three new charges that he questioned her on have previously been mentioned as accusations made of her charity work either in the Iranian media or in her previous trials:

1. That she had joined organisations specifically working to overthrow the regime. His questions referred to her media charity work in London.
2. That she had been paid by these organisations working against the regime. This refers to the fact that she was a paid employee of Reuters and the BBC in London.
3. That she once attended a demonstration outside the Iranian Embassy in London – a photo was found from searching her private email account.



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The Judge dismissed one of these charges, arguing that receiving her salary for her job in London was not a distinct crime from the first charge, and so did not type it up on the charge sheet. He noted that he was defending her on that.

Nazanin signed to say she rejected all these new charges. She does not accept them as new crimes. They are again simply accusations that she works for Reuters in London and used to work for the BBC, now claimed to be a crime worth 16 years.

The significance of the new charges is that Nazanin was legally eligible for early release under Iranian law from next month. The additional charges as signed by the Judge yesterday would remove that eligibility for a number of years.

Nazanin was not allowed to have a lawyer present during this hearing. She was allowed to call her lawyer following the hearing. (Her second lawyer, since the first still has a legal case against him personally hanging over him for his defence of her). He had not been informed about the new charges, and was shocked – as he was still in negotiations with the Judiciary over her temporary release.

No date and Judge for the full trial has yet been assigned.

#### **Bail Provided to Prevent Nazanin Being Returned Solitary Confinement**

So that Nazanin was not put back into solitary confinement under IRGC control again Her family were required to come and pay bail, for the new charges, pending any new interrogations legally allowed for these new crimes.

Nazanin's father went to meet the judge, and told to bring his payslips. The family were only told by the Judge that this payment was necessary for her application for furlough (temporary release) – though they had already been asked to prepare the deeds of the family home for this. They were not told about the new charges until they saw Nazanin at a scheduled family visit.

The additional sentencing was alluded to, as Judge Ghanaatkar told Nazanin's parents that the IRGC wanted to sentence Nazanin to 21 years, and accused her of attempting to overthrow the regime, and receiving money from foreign organisations.

The Judge ruled that her family needed to pay a sum of 30 million toman (approximately £6,000) as additional bail to prevent her being moved to solitary for these charges.

#### **Devastated Impact**

During the course of the hearing, Nazanin said she felt very ill. She was shocked, having been promised temporary release by the Judiciary only 2 weeks earlier. She cried all the time, and nearly passed out. She couldn't believe the heavy blow.

Initially Nazanin was called in to see the Judge alone. But when she began uncontrollably crying, one of the female guards was also brought in. She told the Judge repeatedly: You know she has to go to see a psychiatrist. You know that she is taking pills for her depression. And you know that she is a calm prisoner. She does not cause trouble.



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He said he knew very much.

When the Judge had finished his questioning, he typed up his Judgement for her to sign whether she agreed or disagreed. Nazanin said she was unable to walk with the shock, but sat there half paralysed. When she had to leave her chair, she could not walk to the table normally. Her legs went numb, and she had to crawl. Her hands were shaking as she signed.

Hours later she reported to her family that her legs were still numb, that she still had a very high heart rate.

Nazanin insisted that she was the one to tell her mother, only during yesterday's family visit. The family all cried again yesterday, though not in front of Nazanin when she had been reassuring them.

She also told them on Saturday, that she had been to see an optician. Her eyesight has deteriorated significantly in prison.

#### **Incredulity at the Invented Charges:**

During the pre-court hearing, Nazanin asked:

*"How is it that two weeks ago Sepah [the IRGC] wanted to give me temporary release, and now they are inventing new charges? What is going on?"*

The Judge did not look up from his desk during the hearing. Nazanin asked him to look her in the eye, but he said that he did not want to.

So she said: *"OK. Please listen. You know this is unfair. If you take a decision today that means that you keep me here one day longer, if you prosecute me in this way, in the next world you must answer to God. Whatever decision you make today you personally are responsible for it before God – for the damage you do to my daughter and her rights."*

*"You might not call me a proper Muslim. But you are one. You pray. You fast. When I lose hope and tell my husband that God doesn't care for me, he calms me down and tells me that God's love will eventually win, and the Truth will prevail."*

The Judge said quietly. *"That is very true. Your husband knows something."*

Nazanin is the only female prisoner in Evin prison with a child aged three or under. The management called to confirm yesterday.

#### **Demands: Time for Iran and UK to condemn – People before Profits**

These new charges invented by the IRGC come in the wake of diplomatic efforts at UNGA two weeks ago. When the Prime Minister and President Rouhani met in New York, Theresa May encouraged President Rouhani to find a humanitarian solution for Nazanin's case, and President Rouhani undertook to address humanitarian concerns.



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When asked about the unconscionable aspects of Nazanin's detention by CNN's Chrisitanne Amanpour, President Rouhani also told CNN that he had a different view to the Judiciary on the cases of dual nationals. See: <http://edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2017/09/26/intv-amanpour-rouhani-prisoners.cnn>

The Foreign Secretary stated at UNGA two weeks ago that progress in the Iranian-UK relationship should depend on a resolution for Nazanin's case and for the other consular cases. See: <https://twitter.com/BorisJohnson/status/910186544228655106>

However, that same week the UK and Iranian governments signed the biggest post-JCPOA contract between Iran and Britain, unveiling a new \$600 million contract at a signing ceremony in London between the Iranian Ministry of Energy and the UK company Quercus to develop a new solar farm in Iran.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2017/09/20/uk-fund-build-one-worlds-biggest-solar-farms-iran/>

Last week a further MOU was signed between the London Chamber of Commerce and the Tehran Chamber of Commerce in the presence of Lord Lamont, the Prime Minister's Trade Representative with Iran, stressing Britain had a positive attitude to Iran now to encourage further UK-Iranian business. <http://en.mehrnews.com/news/128342/Iran-Britain-ink-MoU-to-deepen-trade-ties>

Both governments are happy to proceed with these corporate deals while Nazanin remains in prison.

Our view as a family is that such promotion of business risks irresponsibility, and not only cold heartedness, to send people to do business in a context when they can be held as a bargaining chip to protect IRGC interests, and no one is willing to speak out against them.

The impact of the IRGC's manoeuvring and bargaining is an abuse of Nazanin and her family that meets the international standards of torture, that must be defended against – by both her governments.

Both the British government in Parliament, and the Iranian Ambassador to the UK need to make public statements this week:

- Affirming in public that Nazanin and her family have been abused enough, and that she is entitled to be defended;
- Criticising the IRGC's abuse of the Iranian legal system to bargain with Nazanin's life in this way;
- Acknowledging that the failure of the Iranian authorities to uphold their own laws, and the failure of the UK to speak out clearly against it, is bad for UK-Iranian business.

For their own interests, it is time for the UK and Iranian governments to condemn these latest charges, as making a mockery of Iranian justice.

### **Campaigning Next Steps**



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We have two Campaigning events this week, so that Nazanin knows she is not forgotten:

On Tuesday 10 October, Reuters are hosting a showing of the play on Nazanin, Looking for Mummy, from 18.00 pm at their Canary Wharf auditorium.

For more information, contact: [Zeina.Najjar@thomsonreuters.com](mailto:Zeina.Najjar@thomsonreuters.com)

Or: <https://www.howellproductions.co.uk/looking-for-mummy-nazanin-s-story>

On Wed 11 October, Amnesty UK are organising an event in Parliament Sq for Nazanin and Kamal Foroughi, between 11am-midday. They will be laying out the hundreds of Tulips that have been made by Amnesty supporters throughout the country.

For more information, Neil Durkin: [Neil.Durkin@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:Neil.Durkin@amnesty.org.uk)

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## Quotations from Nazanin and from Richard Ratcliffe

### Quotations from Nazanin:

*“Last night when I was told I was going to be taken to court in the morning, I thought it might be to send me on furlough (temporary release). So I wrote myself a note to look back at in future – saying I don’t know how I will feel tomorrow night. I don’t even know where I will be sleeping. Now I look again at that note. I was not expecting this.”*

*“Going there to that court, seeing them, and answering the same old questions made me have a heart attack. I nearly passed out. I haven’t physically recovered yet. My legs are still numb. My heartbeat still high.”*

*“I have always been honest with them about what I have done and who I worked for. I was not trying to overthrow the regime. I love my country. It is ridiculous. I have not done anything since I was sentenced. I have just been a prisoner in the corner, enduring quietly. What have they done this for?”*

*“I am tired, and hopeless. I don’t know why God is doing this to me. It sank inside me what happened in the morning. Today was hell. It feels like I have been sent back further from you. It feels like I have gone backwards.”*

*“I am so tired. Recently I thought it was the beginning of the end. But now I am back to the beginning. My life is slipping away from my hands, and I can’t do anything. I just want to come home.”*

*“The truth shall prevail – I haven’t done anything wrong, and I am paying the price for something else. This is unjust. The people who have made these decisions will be punished. Every day that they are keeping my daughter away from me, from both her parents, they will be punished. I am confident of that.”*

### Quotations from Richard (Nazanin’s husband):

*“I have told Nazanin that these are just games by the IRGC – games that look more and more desperate games – inventing new charges to prevent her early release does not make them look intimidating. It makes them look foolish.”*

*“It also brings the integrity of the Iranian legal system into question – as the IRGC play their games with my family’s lives, look to extract more privileges from the Iranian and UK governments. They are treating their justice system like a bazaar – making up stories to get a higher price. They are bringing their country to shame.”*

*“The Iranian Ambassador and the UK government need to stand up, and say they will protect British Iranians. It is not enough just to focus in public on their business deals, and to keep a silent pretence. It looks like heads in the sands.”*

*“Thanks to the Revolutionary Guards’ antics, this is a justice system that can no longer look its victims in the eye, can no longer look itself in the mirror.”*



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*“It is not melodramatic to say what is happening to Nazanin is torture. Look at the impact on her. Justice must be done. The Iranian government needs to stand up for its citizens – it is what President Rouhani was elected for, to stop the abuse of Iranian citizens by the IRGC who are protecting only their own economic privileges.”*



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