

UK: Anoosheh Ashoori running London Marathon to help free Britons jailed in Iran



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Morad Tahbaz and Mehran Raoof among cases being highlighted

Activists also taking part in a 'London to Tehran Challenge'

'Everyone at Amnesty will be cheering Anoosheh and Aryan on' - Sacha Deshmukh

Anoosheh Ashoori and his son Aryan (32) will run this weekend's London Marathon as part of an Amnesty International UK campaign to secure the release of UK nationals arbitrarily jailed in Iran.

Sixty-eight-year-old Ashoori from south-east London - a UK national who was jailed in Iran for four-and-a-half years on trumped-up charges before being released along with fellow Briton Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe earlier this year - will wear a t-shirt emblazoned with "Amnesty International", while Aryan's t-shirt will say "Hostage International".

Since his release from Evin Prison in Tehran in March this year, Ashoori has been campaigning on behalf of others unjustly detained in Iran, including Morad Tahbaz, 66, a British wildlife conservationist who has been arbitrarily jailed for more than four years, and fellow UK national Mehran Raoof, 65, a trade unionist also serving a long jail term in Iran after being subjected to a grossly unfair trial.

Tahbaz was recently released from Evin Prison on furlough, but is being forced to wear an electronic ankle tag and could

be recalled to jail at any time.

The jailing of Tahbaz and Raoof - as well as Ashoori, Zaghari-Ratcliffe and numerous other individuals in recent years - is part of a clear pattern where the Iranian authorities have brought unfounded national security-related charges against foreign nationals and dual-nationals to exert diplomatic pressure on other countries.

Some of the families of UK nationals jailed in this way have been sharply critical of the response of the UK government, and as part of its No-One Left Behind campaign Amnesty is calling on ministers to develop a clear plan for securing the immediate and unconditional release of British nationals arbitrarily detained abroad. As part of this, Amnesty is calling for the Foreign Secretary James Cleverly and the Prime Minister Liz Truss to establish regular meetings with the Tahbaz and Raoof families to explain what actions the UK is taking on behalf of their loved ones.

Supporters of Ashoori's marathon run can sponsor him to raise funds for Amnesty's work here.

Anoosheh Ashoori said:

"I always say that there are two golden rules for victory - rule one is that you should always remember that perseverance pays off, and rule two is that you must never forget rule number one! That's how I'll be tackling the London Marathon."

"After recent developments in Iran, I've been humbled by the bravery I've seen from Iranian women, as well as allies who've taken to the streets to fight for their rights to protest and for freedom. I'm dedicating the run to the innocent people locked up in Iran's prisons, the many lives lost during these protests, and the millions of people fighting for a better future. Thanks for supporting our cause. Humanity will win."

"Anoosheh's ordeal in Iran only ended a few months ago, so it's amazing and truly humbling that here he is pounding the streets of London to raise awareness of the plight of Morad and Mehran. This is yet another reminder to the Government that UK nationals are still languishing in detention in Iran and

that ministers need to start working with the families to get these people out of detention and back home as soon as possible. On Sunday, everyone at Amnesty will be cheering Anoosheh and Aryan on - and we hope that spectators and TV viewers at home will get behind their efforts to free Morad and Mehran.”

As part of the No-One Left Behind campaign, during October Amnesty activists are taking part in a London to Tehran Challenge which will see them conducting sponsored runs, walks and bike rides to collectively cover the equivalent of the distance between the two capitals - 3,209 miles. The challenge coincides with Morad Tahbaz’s birthday (1 October) and the two-year point since Mehran Raoof’s arrest (16 October).

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