**Iranian TV Says Post Correspondent Jason Rezaian Convicted**

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https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\_east/iranian-tv-says-post-correspondent-jason-rezaian-convicted/2015/10/12/b1652690-ee9e-11e4-8abc-d6aa3bad79dd\_story.html

Washington Post correspondent Jason Rezaian, imprisoned in Tehran for more than 14 months, has been convicted in an espionage trial that ended in August, Iranian state television reported.

News of a verdict in Tehran's Revolutionary Court initially came early Sunday, but court spokesman Gholam Hossein Mohseni-Ejei did not specify the judgment. In a state TV report late Sunday, Mohseni-Ejei said definitively that Rezaian, The Post’s correspondent in Tehran since 2012, was found guilty.

But many details remained unknown. Rezaian faced four charges — the most serious of which was espionage — and it was not immediately clear whether he was convicted of all charges. Rezaian and The Post have strongly denied the accusations, and his case has drawn wide-ranging denunciations including statements from the White House and media freedom groups.

It also was not known what sentence has been imposed. The judge who heard the case is known for handing down harsh sentences, and Rezaian potentially faces a sentence of 10 to 20 years. It was not even known whether Rezaian himself has been informed of the conviction.

Reflecting the murky nature of the trial that was held behind closed doors, Iranian TV quoted Mohseni-Ejei saying: "He has been convicted, but I don't have the verdict's details."

[Martin Baron,](https://www.washingtonpost.com/pr/wp/2015/10/12/new-statement-from-martin-baron-on-the-posts-jason-rezaian/) executive editor of The Post, called the guilty verdict “an outrageous injustice” and “contemptible.”

“Iran has behaved unconscionably throughout this case, but never more so than with this indefensible decision by a Revolutionary Court to convict an innocent journalist of serious crimes after a proceeding that unfolded in secret, with no evidence whatsoever of any wrongdoing,” he said in a statement.

Top Iranian officials, including President Hassan Rouhani, have repeatedly floated the idea of a prisoner exchange in recent weeks. Rouhani has suggested that Iran might push to expedite the release of Rezaian and two other Iranian Americans if the United States freed Iranian citizens convicted of violating economic sanctions against Tehran. Saeed Abedini of Boise, Idaho, is a pastor imprisoned for organizing home churches. Amir Hekmati of Flint, Mich., is a former Marine who has spent four years in prison since his arrest during a visit to see his grandmother.

In an unconfirmed account of the verdict, the state-run Islamic Republic of Iran News Network reported Monday that Rezaian was accused of “spying on Iran’s nuclear programs” and giving the U.S. government information on people and companies skirting the sanctions. Oddly, it called Rezaian, a dual U.S.-Iranian national, an American citizen. The Iranian government does not recognize dual citizenship and has treated Rezaian in court solely as an Iranian.

“Jason Rezaian is an American citizen who was arrested in July 2014 for the crimes of spying on Iran’s nuclear programs and compiling information on circumventing the sanctions,” the network said on its web site. “Having entered Iran . . . under the guise of journalism, he began to identify individuals and companies who were evading sanctions and cooperating with Iran. The information that Rezaian provided to the Americans resulted in many Iranian and international businessmen and companies being placed on America’s sanctions list.”

The network offered no attribution for its account, which appeared to echo a thinly sourced report by the semiofficial Fars News Agency in April. That report alleged that Rezaian had provided information on the impact of sanctions on Iran and that the information had been used by government agencies such as the CIA. It compared the alleged activity to “selling food to the enemy in wartime.”

Rezaian’s brother, [Ali Rezaian](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/10/12/journalists-and-family-of-jason-rezaian-denounce-guilty-verdict/), said his family has been unable to get information on the verdict. Their mother, Mary Rezaian, along with Jason Rezaian’s wife and his defense lawyer, went to the courthouse Monday seeking clarification, he said. But they were turned away without being given any additional information.

“As a consequence, at this point we still have no clarity regarding Jason’s fate,” Ali Rezaian said in a statement. “Should the verdict be anything other than a full exoneration, we will appeal and seek the justice that Jason deserves.”

Ali Rezaian maintained his brother’s innocence and condemned his continued incarceration. Monday marks Rezaian’s 447th day in custody.

“Today’s events are just the latest in what has long been a travesty of justice and an ongoing nightmare for Jason and our family,” he added. “This follows an unconscionable pattern by Iranian authorities of silence, obfuscation, delay and a total lack of adherence to international and Iranian law. To this day, the Iranian government has provided no proof of the trumped-up charges against Jason.”

The Associated Press reported that Leila Ahsan, Rezaian’s lawyer, said on Sunday that “there are no new developments” and that she had not received the verdict yet. She could not be reached immediately for comment on Monday.

Baron also said there would be an appeal, and Ahsan is expected to ask the court to release Rezaian on bail until a final resolution is reached. Under Iranian law, Rezaian has 20 days to appeal.

“The contemptible end to this ‘judicial process’ leaves Iran’s senior leaders with an obligation to right this grievous wrong," Baron said. “Jason is a victim — arrested without cause, held for months in isolation, without access to a lawyer, subjected to physical mistreatment and psychological abuse, and now convicted without basis. He has spent nearly 15 months locked up in Iran’s notorious Evin Prison, more than three times as long than any other Western journalists.

“The only thing that has ever been clear about this case is Jason’s innocence,” Baron continued. “Any fair and just review would quickly overturn this unfounded verdict. Jason should be exonerated and released; he and his wife, Yeganeh Salehi, who has been out on bail, should both be granted, without delay, the full freedom that is their right.”

The State Department said there still has been no official confirmation of a verdict despite the news reports by Iran’s state-run television.

“Unfortunately, this is not surprising given that this process has been opaque and incomprehensible from the start,” said State Department spokesman John Kirby. “Regardless of whether there has been a conviction or not, we continue to call for the government of Iran to drop all charges against Jason and release him immediately.”

Rezaian, 39, was arrested on July 22, 2014. He has been held since then in Evin Prison, where many political prisoners are detained and interrogated. His trial was cloaked in secrecy, with even his wife and mother denied permission to attend.

Rezaian's case attracted international attention as an example of Iranian government repression, despite President Rouhani’s desire to expand personal freedoms in Iran and improve relations with the West.

Human rights activists said Rezaian’s treatment by the Iranian judicial system highlights abuses that are common in Iran.

Hadi Ghaemi, executive director of the New York-based International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, called Rezaian’s prosecution and trial “a travesty of justice.”

“In Jason’s conviction, the judge delivered the will and demand of the intelligence services,” he said. “This is politicized justice at its worst.”

When the trial began May 26, the judge read the indictment against Rezaian, and the session was adjourned after about two hours. No family members or independent observers were allowed to attend.

Three subsequent sessions were held, one of them a day before the conclusion of a [July 14 nuclear deal](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/historic-nuclear-deal-with-iran-expected-to-be-announced/2015/07/14/5f8dddb2-29ea-11e5-a5ea-cf74396e59ec_story.html) between Iran and six world powers, including the United States. The court held its final hearing in the case on Aug. 10, Rezaian’s attorney said. She did not provide details.

On the first anniversary of his detention, The Post formally [petitioned the U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/washington-post-seeks-un-help-in-freeing-journalist-held-by-iran/2015/07/21/524081c4-2f20-11e5-8f36-18d1d501920d_story.html?hpid=z1) for help in securing Rezaian’s release. The Post accused the Iranian government of flagrant human rights violations during the “arbitrary and unlawful” detention of the journalist.

The petition noted that the judge in the case, [Abolghassem Salavati](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/hard-liner-judge-assigned-case-of-post-reporter-jason-rezaian-jailed-in-iran/2015/02/01/5f21de04-a8c2-11e4-a06b-9df2002b86a0_story.html), is a hard-liner known for imposing draconian sentences — including long prison terms, lashings and execution — on political prisoners. Salavati has been under European Union sanctions since 2011 for human rights violations.

During the trial, the petition said, Rezaian was allowed only limited contact with his attorney and had no opportunity to present witnesses or evidence in his defense or challenge any evidence against him. It described Salavati as clearly biased in favor of the prosecution, which “presented no live witnesses, no real evidence, and nothing else to justify the charges, much less anything to prove that Rezaian is guilty of any crime.”

The Post’s petition also noted strains between hard-liners championed by Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and more moderate members of the Rouhani government — strains exacerbated by the nuclear deal. “There are reasons to believe that Rezaian’s arrest, detention, and trial are linked not only to the nuclear negotiations and recent deal, but also to the internal tensions among the political factions within Iran,” the petition said.

The head of the U.N. Working Group and two other [U.N. human rights experts](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/un-panel-expresses-grave-concern-over-detention-of-posts-jason-rezaian/2015/08/14/5c06f20c-4293-11e5-9f53-d1e3ddfd0cda_story.html) expressed grave concern on Aug. 14 about Rezaian’s continued incarceration, saying that his legal rights and due process had been ignored and calling for his immediate release.

Top Iranian officials in September floated the idea of a [prisoner exchange](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/iranian-president-urges-quicker-steps-on-possible-mutual-detainee-releases/2015/09/25/30445b1c-638d-11e5-9757-e49273f05f65_story.html)involving Rezaian and at least two other Americans held in Iran, but the Post reporter remained incarcerated while passing a [grim milestone](https://www.washingtonpost.com/pr/wp/2015/10/06/the-posts-jason-rezaian-held-nearly-444-days-the-duration-of-iran-hostage-crisis/). By Oct. 10, he had been detained longer than the 52 Americans held during the Iranian hostage crisis three decades ago.

Rezaian was [arrested along with his wife](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/iran-confirms-arrest-of-post-correspondent/2014/07/25/54fdbc9c-13f6-11e4-8936-26932bcfd6ed_story.html), Salehi, an Iranian journalist. She was [released on bail in October 2014](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/iran-frees-wife-of-posts-tehran-correspondent-but-he-remains-in-custody/2014/10/05/608ecece-1495-4468-89b2-2d327c439983_story.html), but Rezaian languished in Tehran’s Evin Prison for months without trial or even specific charges.

In a previous case that drew international attention, three American hikers who were charged with espionage after straying into Iran from the Iraqi region of Kurdistan in 2009 were eventually released after the payment of $465,000 “bail” for each of them.

Sarah Shourd was freed after 14 months on “humanitarian grounds” because of her declining health, while Joshua Fattal and Shane Bauer were held for two years before they were each sentenced to eight years in prison in August 2011 by the same judge who presided over Rezaian’s trial. Fattal and Bauer were nevertheless released and flown out of the country a month later.

Maziar Bahari, an Iranian-Canadian journalist and filmmaker who served as Newsweek magazine’s Iran correspondent, was imprisoned at Evin for four months in 2009 and charged with spying before being released on $300,000 bail.

Haleh Esfandiari, an Iranian American scholar, was arrested in 2007 while visiting her elderly mother and held at Evin for more than three months on charges of espionage and endangering national security. She was released on $333,000 bond.

After months of [harsh treatment](http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/detention-taking-devastating-toll-on-post-reporter-detained-in-iran/2014/12/10/bf4036a8-8015-11e4-9f38-95a187e4c1f7_story.html), including solitary confinement, that took a heavy toll on Rezaian’s physical and mental health, Iranian prison authorities allowed him to get [outside medical treatment](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/iranian-prison-authorities-allow-post-reporter-to-get-medical-treatment/2015/02/12/ef53c2ce-b2ec-11e4-854b-a38d13486ba1_story.html) for chronic eye infections and painful groin inflammation, his brother, Ali, said in February.

Rezaian was also allowed several visits from his wife, who brought him care packages, and was placed in a cell with another prisoner, the brother said.

Then, more than seven months into his incarceration, Rezaian was [granted permission to hire an attorney](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/detained-post-correspondent-is-allowed-a-lawyer-but-not-one-he-wants/2015/03/01/2779648a-c056-11e4-a188-8e4971d37a8d_story.html), his family announced March 1. But the Revolutionary Court rejected the lawyer chosen by his family, Masoud Shafiei, who had represented the three American hikers.

The Rezaian family then hired Ahsan, an Iranian attorney who also represented Rezaian’s wife.

Ahsan [disclosed in April](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/post-reporter-jailed-in-iran-faces-4-charges-including-espionage/2015/04/20/3ea79ac8-e757-11e4-aae1-d642717d8afa_story.html) that an indictment she was allowed to read charged Rezaian with espionage and three other serious crimes, including “collaborating with hostile governments” and “propaganda against the establishment.” Rezaian was also accused of gathering information “about internal and foreign policy” and providing it to “individuals with hostile intent.” As an example of his alleged contact with a “hostile government,” the indictment said he wrote to Obama.

The trial proceedings indicated that some of the claims against Rezaian stemmed from a visit he made to a U.S. consulate regarding a visa for his wife and a letter he wrote seeking a job in the Obama administration in 2008 — material that was apparently taken from his confiscated laptop.

Baron [said on April 26](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-politics/wp/2015/04/26/post-editor-iran-has-given-no-evidence-reporter-jason-rezaian-did-anything-wrong/) that Iran had produced “no evidence” that Rezaian “engaged in espionage or did anything other than report on what was happening in that country.” Appearing on CNN’s “Reliable Sources” program, The Post’s executive editor added, “In fact, most of his coverage focused on the culture and daily life of people in Iran.”

Iranian Foreign Minister [Mohammad Javad Zarif](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/iranian-official-suggests-post-reporter-spied-for-us/2015/04/29/0f3ca0cc-ee8b-11e4-8666-a1d756d0218e_story.html) said three days later that Rezaian may have been asked to gather information by someone working for the U.S. government. Speaking at a New York University forum, Zarif said a “low-level operative” may have tried to “take advantage” of Rezaian. He suggested that the reporter was vulnerable in seeking a U.S. visa for his wife.

To press for Rezaian’s release, the family launched an [online petition](https://www.change.org/p/his-excellency-supreme-leader-ayatollah-seyyed-ali-khamenei-we-request-the-immediate-and-unconditional-release-of-jason-rezaian-from-iranian-custody) that drew support from hundreds of thousands in more than 140 countries. The family also published an [open letter](http://freejasonandyegi.com/post/113528969270/an-open-letter-to-his-excellency-judiciary-chief)to Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani, the chief of the Iranian judiciary, complaining of “the ongoing disregard for the legal protections” that Iran’s constitution guarantees its citizens.

Born in Marin County, Calif., to an Iranian emigre father and an American mother, Rezaian moved to Iran in 2008 and worked as a journalist for publications, including the San Francisco Chronicle. He joined The Post in 2012 and wrote stories that he hoped would give readers a deeper and more nuanced view of Iran; one of the last before his arrest recounted the travails of the country’s [fledgling baseball team](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/baseball-in-iran-is-more-like-the-bad-news-bears-than-the-major-leagues/2014/07/16/767f8752-3ea8-4b96-9198-e44136771a25_story.html).

Iran does not recognize dual nationality, and it barred any U.S. role in the case, including consular visits by diplomats representing U.S. interests. Diplomatic relations between Washington and Tehran were severed in 1980 during the Iranian hostage crisis.

Rezaian’s case came up repeatedly in talks in Switzerland between U.S. and Iranian negotiators over Tehran’s nuclear program. The U.S. side pressed for the release of the jailed journalist, as well as the two other imprisoned Americans, and asked for information on an American who has been missing since he visited Iran’s Kish Island in 2007.

American boxing legend [Muhammad Ali](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/world/wp/2015/03/12/muhammad-ali-urges-iran-to-free-jailed-post-reporter-jason-rezaian/), who is popular in the Muslim world, weighed in on Rezaian’s behalf in March, urging Iranian authorities to free him.

But as Rezaian’s imprisonment continued, it became increasingly apparent that his case was caught up in [internal rivalries](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/18/jason-rezaian-washington-post-iran-president-hardliners-feud) in Iran between hard-liners implacably hostile to the United States and relative moderates supporting Rouhani, who was elected in 2013.

With hard-liners under Khamenei, the country’s ultimate religious and political authority, firmly in control of key levers of power, the case served to underscore the relative impotence of the Rouhani government in judicial and national security matters.