

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons

Ref.: UA OTH 46/2025

(Please use this reference in your reply)

17 April 2025

Dear Mr. Muttaqi,

We have the honour to address you in our capacity as Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan; Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 52/7, 54/1, 53/4, 51/21 and 51/4.

In this connection, we would like to bring to your attention information we have received concerning Mr. Peter Reynolds and Mrs. Barbie Reynolds, nationals of the United Kingdom, married, aged 79 and 75 respectively, reportedly wrongfully deprived of their liberty in Pul-e-Charkhi prison, in Kabul, and held in conditions of detention that are considered to fall below international standards. Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds health status is reportedly rapidly deteriorating. We therefore believe that your urgent intervention on their case is necessary to help protect their life and preserve their health.

According to the information received:

Mr. Peter Reynolds and Mrs. Barbie Reynolds, nationals of the United Kingdom, married, have been living continuously in Afghanistan for the past 18 years, in Nayak city, Bamyan province.

In 2009, Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds founded 'Rebuild Consultants', a registered research and training business, based in Kabul, that, over the years, provided training services to various businesses and organizations in different parts of Afghanistan.

In late January 2025, on their return from a trip to Kabul to meet with a friend, Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds were allegedly arrested by the de facto local police who reportedly told them that the matter would be quickly resolved. They were held in a local prison for approximately 24 hours. After approximately 24 hours they were detained in a local detention center. They were able to make contact by telephone with a family member. Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds were released and returned to their home in Nayak.

Taliban

The following day, however, the de facto police brought them to Bamyan city, the capital of Bamyan province, and subsequently to Kabul for further questioning. Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds were released again and returned to their home in Nayak.

The day after, Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds were arrested, allegedly without a warrant, or any information as to the reasons of their arrest, and brought to the headquarters of the Ministry of Interior in Kabul. During the travel by car to Kabul, Mr. Reynolds was allegedly restrained by chains.

At the de facto Ministry of Interior, Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds were separated. Mrs. Reynolds reportedly refused to eat for 24 hours until they were reunited. They have been provided with consular access.

On 6 March 2025, Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds were transferred together to the maximum-security prison of Pul-e-Charkhi, located in eastern Kabul. During the transfer, Mr. Reynolds' hands and feet were allegedly held in shackles, and he was reportedly hit on the back of the head by a guard. It is also alleged that Mr. Reynolds' handcuffs were so tight that his hands shook for 30 minutes after they were removed.

In Pul-e-Charkhi prison, Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds were separated and placed in the men's section and the women section's respectively. Mrs. Reynolds was able to contact her family during her detention.

On 20 March 2025, Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds were brought before a de facto court. During the transfer, they were allegedly held in shackles, chained at the hands and feet to other prisoners.

At the hearing, Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds were reportedly questioned without access to legal representation about religious books that were found in their house in Nayak and were told that it was unlawful for them to possess their own Afghan passports. Reportedly, they remained uninformed about the charges brought against them, nor were they presented with evidence of any crime.

On 22 March 2025, Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds were brought before the court a second time, but were informed that the case could not proceed that day.

On 24 March 2025, Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds were brought before the court again. They were allegedly asked the same questions they had been asked previously. On this occasion, their answers were reportedly written down and translated into English, for their signatures.

Since this last hearing, Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds' cases remain pending. According to media reports the above mentioned events have been described by representatives of the de facto authorities as a "small matter and should not be a cause for concern" and that "God willing, their problem will soon be resolved".¹

¹ See <https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-taliban-detained-british-couple-82a9fa1f2bc53486ca31859fcadaced5>

According to reports, both Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds suffer from weakness, weight loss, and serious digestive issues.

Mr. Reynolds is reliant on prescription heart medication following a transient ischemic attack (mini stroke) that occurred in 2023. The de facto authorities have reportedly not provided him with relevant medication, though he has secured some medication through consular visit. Since being detained, he has had two eye infections.

Reportedly Mr. Reynolds is suffering from a “tremor” in his head, and in his left hand, which could be signs of another impending stroke. Mr. Reynolds was reportedly told that he could be taken to a local hospital; however, he allegedly refused, out of fear that he would be subjected to unwanted surgery in unsanitary conditions.

Mrs. Reynolds is reported to be malnourished, with difficulties to stand, and often fainting. She allegedly receives one meal per day, which the women in prison collect with smaller buckets from an overall vessel, and then cook in their cell.

The latest information from mid-April is that Mrs. Reynolds’ health situation has declined significantly. It has been noted that her memory has been adversely affected and she is easily confused.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds are being detained with a single change of clothes and have allegedly not been given sufficient hygiene products or bedding.

They have received a consular visit.

While we do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of the above-mentioned allegations, we are concerned about the rapidly declining health of Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds, brought on by and/or exacerbated by the terrible conditions of their detention. Given their advanced ages and medical health, they may be at risk of irreversible harm, and even fatal consequences. In particular, the alleged lack of access to adequate medical care may pose an increasingly imminent threat to their life and health.

Persons deprived of liberty have the right to be informed at the time of arrest of the reasons for their arrest, and subsequently of any charges brought against them. If not promptly charged or convicted of any crime, they should be released.

Persons deprived of liberty must always be treated in a humane and age-appropriate manner and with respect for their inherent dignity, including during transportation and court hearings. Physical violence shall never be used, and restraints shall be used only when authorized by law and necessary to prevent escape, and if then, only as least intrusive and for minimal time. They shall always have access, inter alia, to effective legal representation and adequate medical assistance; prompt judicial review of their initial and continuing deprivation of liberty; remedies for any violations; and have the possibility to communicate with their relatives and to be visited by

independent human rights monitoring bodies. They shall also be promptly informed of their right to communicate with a consular post or the diplomatic mission of the State of which they are nationals.

Inadequate conditions of detention and standards of treatment may constitute violations of the prohibition of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, or even amount to torture. When such conditions are seriously inadequate, they may further present an immediate or longer-term danger to life and health.

Based on the above, we are concerned that, should the reported allegations be established, they could amount to a violation of Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds' right to life, protected by article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), acceded to by Afghanistan in 1983; their right to liberty and security of person and to be free from arbitrary or unlawful detention, pursuant to article 9, ICCPR; their right to be free from torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including the requirement of humane and dignified treatment in detention, protected by article 5 of the UDHR, articles 7 and 10 of the ICCPR, and, at least, articles 1, 2 and 16 of the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), ratified by Afghanistan in 1987; as well as of the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, recognised in article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, also acceded to by Afghanistan in 1983. Older persons deprived of their liberty shall have access to the same rights as other detainees, however they shall also be treated in line with United Nations Principles for Older Persons (GA res. 46/91, principles 11, 12, 13, 17 and 18).

In light of the above, we respectfully call for both Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds to be released immediately and provided with urgent, adequate and comprehensive medical care, treatment and monitoring of their health situation, as appropriate, in a civil hospital. We stress that time is of the essence.

The full texts of the human rights instruments and standards recalled above are available on www.ohchr.org or can be provided upon request.

In view of the urgency of the matter, we would appreciate a response as soon as possible on the initial steps taken by you to safeguard the rights of the above-mentioned individuals from irreparable harm and without prejudicing any eventual legal determination.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would also be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and any comment you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide updated and detailed information on the present state of physical and mental health of Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds. Please explain what measures have been taken, or may be envisaged to be adopted, to

protect their life and preserve their health and well-being, including timely access to adequate medical care, and in a civil hospital, as appropriate.

3. Please provide detailed and updated information regarding the grounds under which Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds are being detained, the scope for judicial review of their continuing detention, and the charges if any that they are facing. Please provide your assessment as to why appropriate alternatives to detention suitable to their age and health (such as house arrest, or regular reporting to the local *de facto* police) are not being utilized. Please provide information about their access to a lawyer of their choosing and other provisions to guarantee a fair trial.
4. Please provide detailed and updated information on Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds conditions of deprivation of liberty and please assess them against international human rights law and standards, in particular the absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including the requirement of humane and dignified treatment in detention, and the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules). Should they be not in alignment, please explain the steps that have been taken to provide appropriate alternatives to detention and/or to improve the conditions in which Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds are held.
5. Please explain whether there has been any investigation on the above-mentioned allegations, as required by international law, and please provide the results of it, including in terms of accountability of persons possibly found responsible of any violation. If there has been no investigation, please explain why.

This communication and any response received from you will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) within 60 days. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person responsible of the alleged violations.

We may publicly express our concerns in the near future as, in our view, the information upon which the press release will be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. We also believe that the wider public should be alerted to the potential implications of the above-mentioned allegations. The press release will indicate that we have been in contact with you to clarify the issue/s in question.

Please be informed that a copy of this letter will also be sent to the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Geneva. As British nationals, a copy will also be sent to the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom in Geneva. Communications transmitted to *de facto* authorities do not in any way imply the

expression of any opinion concerning the legal status of any territory, city or area, or of its authority.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Alice Jill Edwards

Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

Richard Bennett

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan

Morris Tidball-Binz

Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions

Tlaleng Mofokeng

Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health

Claudia Mahler

Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons