



PRESS RELEASE

CALL FOR WIFE OF DUBAI'S BILLIONAIRE RULER TO BE STRIPPED OF UN STATUS

Call comes as kidnapping survivor accuses Robinson of 'tarnished reputation'

London, 9 April 2019 – Leading NGOs, human rights lawyers and campaigners working for the release of a captured Dubai princess have called on the United Nations to strip the wife of Dubai's ruler of her status as a UN Messenger of Peace.

The calls comes on the day the survivor of a dramatic kidnapping by Emirati and Indian state troops has accused the former UN human rights commissioner Mary Robinson of "*siding with dictatorship and oppression of women*" and betraying her status as a globally recognised humanitarian and women's rights campaigner.

It also comes on the 400th day since the Indian Ocean kidnapping.

On 24 February 2018, Princess Latifa al Maktoum made a dramatic escape from what she calls her "*gilded cage*" home in Dubai's royal palace, and was accompanied across the border into Oman by her friend Tiina Jauhiainen.

They made it to a US-registered boat which set sail for India, but on 4 March 2018 it was stormed off the coast of Goa by crack security forces of the UAE and India, with Latifa and Jauhiainen forcibly captured and taken back to Dubai. Jauhiainen was released two weeks later, after being held in solitary confinement and subjected to grave abuses of her most basic human rights, but Latifa remains in enforced detention. The UN, Amnesty, and Human Rights Watch have all condemned the kidnapping and sought explanations from both India and the UAE.

Four months ago, Latifa was the subject of a controversial PR stunt by Princess Haya bint al Hussein, the wife of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, the billionaire ruler of Dubai. She invited the former Irish president and former UN human rights commissioner Mary Robinson to Dubai to vouch for Latifa's welfare and encourage the world to believe the princess was in good hands with her family – the very family she sought to escape from for almost two decades.

Robinson's role was roundly criticized in the media, and now those behind the Free Latifa campaign, Latifa's friends and supporters, have filed a complaint with the UN calling on Haya to be suspended from its team of goodwill ambassadors and "messengers for peace". The complaint cites the legal basis for the suspension.

Leading signatory David Haigh, a human rights lawyer who heads the advocacy group Detained International which acts for Princess Latifa, said: *“Princess Haya is a UN ambassador, yet her cheap and tawdry publicity stunt involving Mary Robinson undermines the UN’s justice and human rights work in two important ways.”*

“Firstly it undermines the efforts of the UN working group on enforced and involuntary disappearances, which is trying to stop kidnappings and hostage-takings across the world. And secondly it belittles the work of the current UN human rights commissioner Michelle Bachellet, who has established initiatives such as “gender champions” and said: ‘Promoting progress towards building a world that guarantees the rights of women and girls is more than a challenge. It’s a necessity and an obligation.’

“It looks to all the world as if Princess Haya has quite blatantly abused her position as a UN ambassador, and it’s hard to see how her position remains tenable, certainly unless and until a full and thorough investigation exonerates her.” Haigh continued.

“Princess Haya’s alleged actions in relation to the abducted Princess Latifa do not seem consistent with her supposed humanitarian role and responsibilities as a UN Goodwill Ambassador and Messenger of Peace. She appears to have colluded with Latifa’s incarceration and drugging against her will by the Dubai authorities. Haya should be suspended from her UN role until Latifa is able to give a full account to the UN of Haya’s actions in relation to the meeting with Mary Robinson and Latifa’s apparent unjustified house arrest,” said Peter Tatchell, Director of the London-based human rights ngo, the Peter Tatchell Foundation.

The complaint has been filed on the same day that Princess Latifa’s best friend, Tiina Jauhiainen sent a sympathetic but hard-hitting letter to Mary Robinson, accusing the former president and human rights commissioner of tarnishing her reputation as a humanitarian and letting down the women’s equality cause everywhere.

Jauhiainen, who describes how she was kept in solitary confinement and threatened with the death penalty after the Indian Ocean kidnapping, wrote in her letter: *“I used to have great admiration for you as one of the first female heads of state, paving the way for other remarkable women, such as Tarja Halonen in my native Finland, to break the glass ceiling. You were a great champion of human rights and equality – hence my disbelief when I saw you supported a ruthless regime in what was clearly a PR whitewashing campaign.”*

“Instead of siding with dictatorship and exploitation of women by falling into your ‘friend’ Haya’s trap, you could have chosen the right side of history. You could have chosen to support Latifa. You could have inspired millions of other women that there is hope, and that there are leaders who listen.”

Haigh, a former managing director of Leeds United who himself was arbitrarily detained and tortured in Dubai over a 22 month period, added: *“People’s sympathy for a princess held captive*

in a palace may be limited by considerations of material affluence, but there's a vital human rights principle at stake here: whether a princess or a pauper, everyone is entitled to the most basic right of self-determination, let alone freedom from abuse and torture, which is why Latifa's arbitrary detention is quite simply illegal. It should not matter who her father or stepmother are, or whether they are friends with Irish presidents or otherwise. Sheikh Mohammed's wealth and connections should not be allowed to detract from Latifa's basic human rights, and she should be freed without delay."

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Copies of the complaint filed with the UN against Princess Haya, the United Nations Guidelines for the designation of Goodwill Ambassadors and messengers of Peace and Tiina Jauhiainen's letter to Mary Robinson accompany this release.

About Free Latifa:

The Free Latifa Campaign is run by Latifa's best friend Tiina Jauhiainen and human rights lawyer and campaigner David Haigh with the support of not for profit legal advocacy NGO Detained International. Updates on the campaign can be found on www.freelatifa.com

Contact Name

Tiina Jauhiainen and David Haigh

Campaign to Free Latifa

Email: latifa@freelatifa.com
Telephone: + 44 (0) 203 868 9995
Twitter: @freelatifa
Facebook: @freelatifa
Instagram: @freelatifa

António Guterres
United Nations Secretary General
United Nations, S-233
New York, NY 10027
United States of America

Michelle Bachelet
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland
infodesk@ohchr.org media@ohchr.org

Dear Sirs,

London, 9 April 2019

RE: Her Royal Highness Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein – United Nations Messenger of Peace

We the undersigned call on the United Nations to suspend Her Royal Highness Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein from her role as UN Messenger of Peace, pending investigation, on the grounds that she is in breach of the Guidelines for the designation of UN Goodwill Ambassadors and Messengers of Peace following her actions concerning the case of her step daughter HRH Princess Latifa Bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the daughter of HRH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai, Vice President and Prime minister of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Background

400 days ago today, on 4 March 2018, state forces of the UAE, in breach of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights (of which the UAE are a signatory), unlawfully attacked a private US-registered vessel in international waters and kidnapped Princess Latifa, against her will, at gunpoint and using tranquilisers, ignored her plea for asylum in the USA, and forcibly returned her to Dubai against her will, where she remains in arbitrary detention.

In May and September 2018, the UN wrote to the governments of both the UAE and India, expressing concern about the kidnapping and the continued arbitrary

detention of Princess Latifa. Latifa received a copy of these letters, transmitted to her by signatories to this complaint through Guernica Chambers.

Also in September 2018, Toby Cadman of Guernica Chambers, together with David Haigh, appeared before the UN's Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID) in Geneva to provide additional evidence and to set out growing grave concerns for the safety of Princess Latifa.

On 6 December 2018, *The Times* newspaper of London reported that, as the UAE and India had continued to ignore the UN WGEID's concerns, the WGEID chairman Bernard Duhaime had written to the UAE stating: "*Serious concern is expressed over the continuous enforced disappearance and alleged killing of Sheikha Latifa Al Maktoum.*" In addition, the WGEID said that information it had received indicated that other occupants of the Nostromo (the vessel from which Princess Latifa was kidnapped) were detained at a military base for two weeks where they were "*interrogated, threatened with death and forced to sign false statements*". Mr Duhaime's letter to the UAE added: "*We believe that the wider public should be informed about these matters.*"

On 21 December 2018, the UAE responded to the UN WGEID. That response has not been made public.

Princess Haya's actions

On 27 December 2018, the former Irish president and United Nations human rights commissioner Mary Robinson stated to the BBC presenter Mishal Husain that she (Robinson) had been contacted by Princess Haya and asked to help in resolving "a family dilemma". Robinson responded by visiting Princess Haya's house briefly on 15 December 2018, after which Robinson claimed in media statements that Princess Latifa was a "troubled young woman" being cared for by her family.

On 24 December 2018, nine days after Robinson's visit, photos of the meeting were released by the media office of the Dubai royal family. In these pictures, Latifa appears to be an unwilling participant in the meeting. It is understood that the photos were taken on the smartphone of Princess Haya at Haya's home, where Latifa had been taken from her incarceration. Mary Robinson and Princess Haya were both aware of this.

On 30 December 2018, *The Times* newspaper reported that "*Dubai paid for Mary Robinson's visit.*"

In an RTÉ interview on 5 January 2019, Princess Haya stated that she invited Mary Robinson to visit her and Princess Latifa to "*seek counsel as a family friend*". She said

that she had “the most enormous gratitude for Mary on a personal level” and that Latifa’s abduction and detention were not anything other than a personal matter.

Implications of Princess Haya’s actions

Princess Haya has contended that her actions in inviting Mary Robinson to Dubai were “*a family affair*”. If this were the case, why did she take photos and release them to the media? This makes no sense. More importantly, it suggests that it was a premeditated operation to try to convince the world that all was well with Princess Latifa and campaigners for Latifa’s release were worrying unduly and not acting in Latifa’s best interests.

Human rights are supposed to be respected the world over, and violations of an adult’s human rights by a parent are no exception to this. By describing Mary Robinson’s visit as “*a family affair*”, Princess Haya was implying that kidnapping a 33-year-old woman at gunpoint and with violence is acceptable as long as it is done by the woman’s family. This is an astonishing implication, and there are plenty of case histories that suggest it is certainly not acceptable for a father to kidnap his daughter and hold her captive in his home.

Given that the UN has a line of investigation that is directly related to the Latifa case – led by the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances – and the current UN human rights commissioner is working to promote “*gender champions*”, Princess Haya’s actions undermine the UN’s work, indeed we view these actions as a deliberate abuse of her position as a UN Messenger of Peace, along with deliberate abuse of a former UN human rights commissioner, to cover up the illegal abduction and arbitrary detention of Princess Latifa.

For these reasons, we believe Princess Haya’s continued role as a UN Goodwill Ambassador and Messenger of Peace is untenable, at least until an investigation has exonerated her of undermining the UN’s efforts in promoting justice and human rights.

Legal basis for suspension

The following clauses come from the Guidelines for the designation of Goodwill Ambassadors and Messengers of Peace:

“4. (b). Be persons of integrity who demonstrate a strong desire to help mobilize public interest in, and support for, the purposes and principles of the United Nations

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4. (e). Be knowledgeable about United Nations goals and activities and/or those of the designating UN Office, Fund or Programme, and be able to articulate them:

- Respect the impartiality and independence of the United Nations and to refrain from any conduct that would adversely reflect on the United Nations;
- Refrain from any activity incompatible with the purposes and principles of the United Nations;
- Exercise good judgement and discretion in all matters relating to the performance of their functions for the United Nations;
- Obtain guidance on their specific activities from the Head of the relevant UN Office, Fund or Programme; and/or staff assigned to liaise with them.

28. The designation of a Goodwill Ambassador or Messenger of Peace shall be terminated if, in the view of the Head of the relevant UN Office, Fund or Programme, the designee is unable or unwilling to carry out the role envisaged in the terms of reference, if the Goodwill Ambassador or Messenger of Peace engages in any activity incompatible with his/her status or with the purposes and principles of the United Nations, or if the termination is in the interest of the Organisation. “

Based on the known facts of Princess Haya’s actions and the wording of the Guidelines, it is hard to see how she can remain a UN Messenger of Peace in the absence of a credible investigation without it harming the standing of the UN’s broader work.

Please reply to this letter by email to latifa@freelatifa.com.

Names of signatories

Campaign to Free Princess Latifa

Detained International

Peter Tatchell Foundation

ICF UAE - International Campaign for Freedom in the UAE

Association for Victims of Torture UAE

AOHR - Arab Organisation For Human Rights

Tiina Jauhiainen

Naji Hamdan, President AVT-UAE (Association for Victims of Torture UAE)

Peter Tatchell Foundation

David Haigh

Stirling Haigh Limited

cc

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Stéphane Dujarric – Spokesman to the UN Secretary General - dujarric@un.org

Stevie Wonder

Leonardo DiCaprio

Yo-Yo Ma

Charlize Theron

Lang Lang

Paulo Coelho

Daniel Barenboim

Jane Goodall

Edward Norton

Michael Douglas

Midori

Malala Yousafzai

TIINA JAUHAINEN
tiina@freelatifa.com

Mary Robinson
6 South Leinster Street
Dublin 2,
Republic of Ireland
+ 353 (0) 1661 8427
info@mrfcj.org
mr@mrfcj.org

The Elders Foundation
3 Tilney Street
London, W1K 1BJ
United Kingdom
+ 44 (0) 207 013 4646
info@theelders.org

London, 9 April
2019

Dear Mrs Robinson,

My name is Tiina Jauhiainen and I am a close friend of Latifa Al Maktoum from Dubai. You met with Latifa in Dubai in December last year, as invited by Princess Haya bint Al Hussein.

I am writing to you directly to express my utmost disappointment in your visit and the subsequent comments you made to the world's media. I am also asking you to reflect on the impact your comments have made not only to Latifa's safety and wellbeing, but also your reputation as a politician and a humanitarian, and the hopes and aspirations of millions of women, like Latifa, in the Middle East who are oppressed by male guardianship laws and customs.

As background, I am sure you were aware that Latifa fled the torture and breaches of human rights she experienced in Dubai. Her desperate escape to freedom ended dramatically at gunpoint almost 400 days ago, when on 4th March 2018 she was kidnapped and taken back to Dubai. I was there with her. I watched in horror as she was dragged off the boat, her pleas for asylum ignored. I was also brutally kidnapped at gunpoint, violently abused, forcibly taken to Dubai where I was held in solitary confinement and arbitrary detention and threatened with the death penalty without

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any criminal charges against me. All this for helping my best friend to gain freedom, a most basic right of self determination which should be a universal human right, regardless of whom your stepmother is friends with, or who your father may be. For you to refer to the violent kidnap, abuse and arbitrary detention of Latifa or myself as “*a family matter*” is simply wrong. And calling Latifa “*a troubled woman*” after meeting Latifa for only an hour or two is extremely disappointing, I have know Latifa for nine years.

I used to have great admiration for you as one of the first female heads of state, paving the way for other remarkable women such as Tarja Halonen in my native Finland, to break the glass ceiling. You were a great champion of human rights and equality – hence my disbelief when I saw you supported a ruthless regime in what was clearly a PR whitewashing campaign designed to the launder human rights abuses done to Latifa. As you would have noticed in the media’s reaction, it backfired.

Instead of siding with dictatorship and the exploitation of women by falling into your “*friend*” Haya’s trap, you could have chosen the right side of history. You could have chosen to support Latifa, and you still can. You could have inspired millions of other women that there is hope, and that there are leaders who listen, and you still can.

We all make mistakes. Personally, I don’t think it’s too late for you to reverse your stance on this visit, and the lasting impact it will have on the hopes and dreams of freedom for women across the Middle East, as well as my friend Latifa. As Latifa’s best friend and an advocate for fairness, equality and human rights, I am urging you to publicly admit what really happened in Dubai in December. Please. Tell the world the true version of the events. This is your chance to clean your tarnished reputation and contribute to causes that have been so close to your heart: human rights, women’s rights and equality.

I am certain that given your previous humanitarian work, especially on women’s rights, that you must have simply been “*tricked*” by Princess Haya into taking part in such a blatant PR stunt. I can only imagine that you would want the opportunity to address this and help Latifa get her freedom and Asylum in a country of her choice. I would very much like the opportunity to meet with you in private to discuss this further and to discuss the UAE’s abuse of myself. My goal with this letter and any meeting is simple, freedom for my friend Latifa.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I remain hopeful of a positive outcome and for Latifa to finally be able to live like both of us: free.

Yours sincerely,

Tiina Jauhiainen

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