

# #FREEUSAZACK

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### LEADING EMIRATIS FACING SANCTIONS OVER AMERICANS' 14 YEAR DUBAI JAIL HELL

Leading, British human rights barristers call on the US Government to demand the Dubai Government immediately release American Zack Shahin.

**London, UK:** 14 October 2021

Two London-based leading human rights barristers have joined the growing global campaign to secure the immediate release of an innocent American family man from Dubai's notorious Al Awir jail, it was announced today (Thursday).

Zack Shahin, 58, who has been on two hunger strikes, is the longest serving American in a foreign jail accused of a white-collar crime. The innocent American has been held in arbitrary detention for the past 14 years as a result of corruption by those reporting to embattled Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohamed Bin Rachid Al Maktoum, Zack faces the prospect of never seeing his Texas home again and dying in a foreign jail.

International human rights barrister Rhys Davies has called on the US Government to do all it can to secure the release of Zack Shahin and to demand Dubai release Zack immediately and confirms he is exploring all legal options through the United Nations and international bodies. Ben Keith, a specialist in Universal Jurisdiction criminal complaints confirmed he will explore all legal options to file criminal complaints against those abusing Zacks human rights. The leading "legal eagles" will work closely with Detained International and Zacks family as part of the #FreeUSAZack campaign.

One of the first legal avenues to be pursued is the filing of a request to the State Department in the US and the Foreign and Commonwealth office in the UK to sanction leading figures in the Dubai Regime, several of those involved in the set-up of Zack, and who report directly to the Dubai ruler.

The sanction requests will call on the US and the UK to seize the assets of leading figures in the Dubai regime, who hold a significant portfolio of assets in both the UK and USA, and further to request that their entry to the US and UK banned. It follows similar sanction requests filed earlier this year by leading human rights Lawyer Rodney Dixon QC, when the leading Dubai figures were the subject of UK sanction applications for the abuse of the Human rights of Sheikha Latifa Al Maktoum, the daughter of the Dubai ruler.

David Haigh, the founder of Detained International and the lawyer appointed by HRH Sheikha Latifa Al Maktoum, the daughter of the ruler of Dubai, in her Dubai escape bid, said: *"We are delighted to have the support of lawyers of such reputation and stature as Rhys and Ben. The combination of their experience, innovation and their expertise in this field makes them uniquely placed to support us and achieve freedom for Zack Shahin."*

*"It is a matter of grave concern that Zack Shahin has suffered from kidnap, torture, arbitrary detention and unfair trials, and whilst the Obama Administration was actively seeking to secure the release of Zack, there was no similar action from the Trump Administration. Together with Zack and his family, we are now looking to President Biden and Secretary Anthony Blinken to bring an end to the daily hell Zack suffers in Dubai and to bring back Zack.*

*"It is always a choice fraught with danger for any detainee in Dubai to take action against the Dubai regime whilst still a detained. Speaking from my own personal experience and from having helped countless victims of UAE injustice, we are gravely concerned that in taking these justifiable steps against the Dubai regime that Zack will suffer the dire consequences of physical abuse, solitary confinement, and other forms of torture.*

*"It is most troubling that as we work on sanction requests and complaints of torture and unfair trials to the United Nations, and as Dubai hosts its controversial Expo 2020 Dubai, the United Nations is preparing to elect the UAE to the Human Rights Council on 15<sup>th</sup> of October, and in just a few weeks' time the UAEs' Major General Raisi is expected to be confirmed as the new president of Interpol, the worlds police force."*

Rhys Davies said today: *"It is deeply concerning that Zack Shahin has still not been released and allowed to leave the UAE. His fundamental human rights are being unjustifiably restricted and abused. The international community must no longer stand by, the American government must no longer stand by, and watch an innocent American die in a foreign jail"*.

*"Ben Keith and I share David Haigh concerns that these steps could put Zack in further and imminent danger, it is for this reason that we will write to Secretary Blinken, President Biden and the US Consulate in Dubai to apprise them of our urgent concerns of retaliation on Zack."*

End

#### **Notes To Editors**

**About Rhys Davies:** Rhys Davies specialises in international criminal law and international human rights law. He is based in London and the Hague and is ranked in the legal 500 as a leading lawyer in international crime. He is experienced in leading campaigns to free British and other citizens detained abroad. He is a frequent speaker at human rights events at the United Nations in Geneva and the House of Commons.

**About Ben Keith:** Ben Keith is a leading barrister specialising in Extradition and International Crime and Human Rights and Universal Jurisdiction complaints. Ben is a Deputy Judge of the Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber). He has expertise in the Middle East including UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Egypt dealing with cases of torture, disappearance, and universal jurisdiction.

Rhys and Ben have been nominated as International Pro Bono Barristers of the year. Rhys can be contacted on: +44 (0) 207 583 1315. Ben can be contacted on +44 (0) 207 332 5400

**About Zack Shahin:** American Zack Shahin is the longest serving American prisoner in a foreign jail accused of a white-collar crime. Zack has already spent 14 years in arbitrary detention in Al Awir jail for a crime he didn't commit. Zack is a 58-year-old American family man, who was imprisoned in Dubai in 2007 through no fault of his own. The company [Deyaar PJSC] the former PepsiCo executive built was hijacked as part of an Emirati political power struggle, and as he found himself set up, a scapegoat and thrown in jail on false charges. Denied any semblance of a fair trial, enforced disappeared, subjected to torture and inhumane and degrading treatment Zack faces the prospect of dying alone in a squalid Dubai jail. Help us to #FreeUSAZack

The #FreeUSAZack campaign has one main goal: to bring Zack Shahin back home to his family in Houston, Texas, USA, by obtaining justice for him. The campaign has been established and is being run by Zack's family, with the support of Detained International, a leading London and Washington-based NGO that provides pro bono legal advocacy to victims of injustice, inequality and other human rights violations in the UAE and the wider Middle East.

**About Detained International:** Detained International is a legal advocacy NGO that provides pro bono support to victims of injustice, inequality and other human rights violations in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, and the wider Middle East. With offices in London and Washington DC, it was founded in 2018 by UAE torture victim David Haigh, a prominent human rights lawyer and justice and equality campaigner. Detained International exists to help people in their hour of need, in many cases when they have been locked up far from home for no legitimate or even apparent reason and lack the support from obvious channels like their national embassy.

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