

being researched by an expert group reporting to the European Commission in Brussels. Its recommendations, due to be published this summer, are expected to confirm that existing organizations are not delivering what is needed. But the solution, says one group member, environmental scientist Jacqueline McGlade, is not necessarily a new IPCC-style body. Instead, the group is expected to recommend a greater effort to gather knowledge and evidence from under-represented groups. In addition, a UN 'clearing house' could extract what governments need from existing science-advice panels and embed these recommendations in global commitments such as those on climate change, biodiversity and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Whether the expert group persuades enough people and organizations to come together to improve the breadth and clout of food-systems science advice remains to be seen. But the analysis and soul-searching along the way will be productive. The latest crisis should be seen as the moment when the world came together to renovate the food system and the research agenda behind it. As Sheryl Hendriks, a food-policy researcher at the University of Pretoria, says: "The geopolitics are more clear than we've ever, ever imagined."

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2. Pingali, P. *Food Sec.* **7**, 583–591 (2015).
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Global science must stand up for Iran's imprisoned scholars

Iranian researchers are at risk as never before. Governments are urging quiet diplomacy – but public campaigns matter.

For an all-too-brief period last month, it seemed that Morad Tahbaz, co-founder of conservation charity the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation in Tehran, might be free to go home after four years as a prisoner in Iran. Tahbaz's charity had been monitoring the critically endangered Asiatic cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus venaticus*) by laying camera traps. Iran's judicial system decreed that this was spying – and Tahbaz, with seven colleagues, is serving a ten-year jail sentence. The charity's other co-founder, sociologist Kavous Seyed Emami, died in prison just weeks after his arrest.

Tahbaz has Iranian, UK and US citizenship. He was initially freed as part of a deal involving two UK–Iranian citizens, charity worker Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and engineer Anoosheh Ashoori. The latter two were swiftly put on aeroplanes to the United Kingdom, but Tahbaz was returned

to prison. His family is in shock and disbelief.

Tahbaz is one in a lengthening list of people involved in scientific activities who are being jailed in Iran for spying. Their plight is all the more precarious because there's little publicity about the charges against them or the horrendous conditions in which they're kept. Those arrested include dual nationals, such as Swedish–Iranian Ahmadreza Djalali, who studies how to make hospitals disaster-proof and is facing a death sentence; and Fariba Adelkhah, a French–Iranian anthropologist working at Sciences Po in Paris, who was arrested and imprisoned in 2019.

One reason dual nationals are arrested is to be used as hostages to extract concessions from Western governments. But the majority of scholars in prison are Iranian nationals and their stories are not well known. They include Niloufar Bayani, a wildlife conservationist formerly with the United Nations. Younger people have been caught up, too, such as Ali Younesi, an award-winning computer-science student at Sharif University of Technology in Tehran.

A new book, *The Uncaged Sky*, by anthropologist Kylie Moore-Gilbert lays bare the severe mental and physical punishments they are enduring – especially women. Moore-Gilbert, who has dual UK and Australian citizenship, is uniquely placed to write this account. Formerly at the University of Melbourne in Australia, she travelled to Iran in 2018 to attend a conference and was arrested at the airport as she was preparing to return to Australia. She was imprisoned for two years on spying charges before being released last year as part of a prisoner swap.

Moore-Gilbert spent time with both Bayani and Adelkhah at the notorious Evin Prison in Tehran. She describes in vivid detail how women undergo interrogation and torture, how they are sexually harassed, forced to spend periods in solitary confinement and denied basic medical care. It's a means of breaking them so they will confess to things they did not do.

The importance of publicity is an overriding message. Moore-Gilbert's family in Australia was advised by its government not to go public about her case, because this could complicate negotiations for her release. But those who avoid publicity become a lower priority for their governments. Moore-Gilbert recalls a phone call with her father in which he said the government was advising staying quiet. In response, she said, "Dad, listen to me – I don't have much time. You need to go to the media. Tell them what's happening to me. Tell them I've been arrested and that I'm being kept in solitary and denied visits from the embassy."

Hostage taking can be countered if governments speak with one voice, instead of each dealing bilaterally with Iran. And constant publicity is one of the best ways to put pressure on all sides to act.

The scientific community must do more to raise its voice in support of jailed scholars. International scientists should speak out for Iranian colleagues who don't benefit from the freedom of speech that they do. Statements, letters – and even mentioning Iran's imprisoned researchers at conferences and events – are ways to tell Iranian scholars that global science stands with them. Iranian science will not flourish until its scholars feel safe.

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