



## **In HAW workshop, Malley commented that the negotiations with Iran on releasing hostages will continue regardless of the outcome of the nuclear Deal**

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Hostage Aid Worldwide (HAW) held a virtual workshop earlier this week, bringing together former US hostages, families of current hostages, and experts and officials to discuss how to bring an end of the continuing cycle of hostage-taking in Iran and elsewhere, how to help and support families, and the legal tools governments need to use more.

Rob Malley, US State Department's Special Envoy for Iran, joined the event to stress the priority for President Biden of bringing hostages home. Mr. Malley briefed the families on the current negotiations with Iran on releasing hostages. He said some progress has been made, and the "contours" are clear for a potential deal. But he was cautious as to when. He also emphasized that the negotiations with Iran on releasing hostages will continue regardless of the status or outcome of the nuclear negotiations.

A large number of former hostages and their spouses attended this event to share with current hostage family members how they coped, and kept going through the lonely fears, and learned to recover normal lives afterwards again. HAW has launched a support network for one-on-one private sessions with families of current hostages, offered by HAW board members Barry Rosen and Kylie Moore-Gilbert, so that others in future do not have to walk alone.

Former hostages Alan Gross and his wife Judith, Barry Rosen and his wife Barbara, Xiyue Wang and his wife Hua also attended and shared their experiences. Families of current hostages joined the HAW workshop from the United States, Germany, France, the UK and other countries.

Masih Alinejad, HAW Honorary board member, stressed the need to put human rights on top of any negotiations with Iran as many non-dual detained Iranian nationals are forgotten.

Legal expert Jason Poblete, and Geoff Dive HAW board member, offered ways to legally pursue ending the business of state hostage-taking. Former hostages including Michael White, Saeed Malekpoor, and Sam Goodwin also joined the call for change. The Director of the FBI fusion cell and a SPEHA representative also attended the workshop. Reflecting on the workshop, HAW president Nizar Zakka said, "By bringing together for the first time, families of hostages, former hostages, government and security agencies, a major step was taken in sending a firm and united message prioritizing hostages."

Also, commenting on Rob Malley's speech, Zakka noted, "We are glad that leaving hostages behind will not happen again under any circumstance."