PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: WEDNESDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2026

DUBAI ROYAL'S EX-WIFE APPEALS TO THE UN AND THE WOMEN OF THE WORLD ON THE UN'S DAY TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Zeynab Javadli, the former wife of Sheikh Saeed bin Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum, a nephew of the Ruler of Dubai, has recorded a new video message to the United Nations, released today on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the first of the UN's 16 Days of Activism. Wearing orange, the colour of the UN campaign, she describes the night her three daughters were taken from their beds, and the criminal court she stood in this morning, accused of kidnapping them. Her lawyers today launch the Justice for Zeynab campaign at justiceforzeynab.com.

LONDON, 25 November 2026: In the seventy-second video, Ms Javadli says: "In June, around eighteen armed men and women broke into my home in the middle of the night. I was beaten and drugged. My children were taken from their beds, screaming, and I've not seen them since. They have lived with me all their lives." She names her daughters, Sheikha Sana, Sheikha Asia and Sheikha Salama, who are ten, eight and seven, and asks: "Please help me be reunited with my girls. Please help me in any way you can."

The video was released by David Haigh, the international human rights lawyer representing Ms Javadli, on the day Ms Javadli and her elderly mother, Solmaz Maharramova, appeared before a new judge in the Dubai Court of First Instance at Al Awir, charged with kidnapping the children from the person with custody of them. In a hearing that lasted about a minute, with no interpreters present, the judge refused Ms Javadli's request to call witnesses and to put in evidence. Neither she nor her lawyer was allowed to speak. The court adjourned the case for judgment on 9 December 2026. It was the first hearing since 18 November, when the previous judge, due to give judgment that day, withdrew from the case, recording "a sense of embarrassment", the formula by which a judge in the UAE steps aside without giving reasons. On the same day, Rodney Dixon KC filed an urgent complaint on her behalf with the UN Special Procedures in Geneva.

Speaking when the complaint was filed last week, Mr Dixon said:

"In 2022 we warned that there was no need for this situation to deteriorate any further. It has, however, now sadly deteriorated beyond anything we feared. As is set out in the communication to the UN and the supporting evidence, Ms Javadli has been beaten, drugged and detained by State Security, separated from her three young daughters, and is now prosecuted for being their mother. We are asking the United Nations to act urgently, before more harm is done to this family."

The Justice for Zeynab campaign brings together her video messages, the story of her case and the ways the public can help in one place, and will carry updates through the 16 Days of Activism to judgment on 9 December, the day before Human Rights Day.

David Haigh, the international human rights lawyer who represents Ms Javadli, said:

"Today the whole world, the United Nations included, is wearing orange and saying no to violence against women. This morning Zeynab wore orange too, and stood in a Dubai

courtroom for one minute, with her elderly mother beside her, charged with kidnapping the children who were dragged screaming from her home in June. There were no interpreters. Neither she nor her lawyer was allowed to say a word, and the judge refused her request to call witnesses and to put in her evidence. Judgment is in two weeks. The UN's own theme this year is 'ensure justice, protect survivors, end impunity'. Zeynab is a survivor, and she is asking the UN to mean it. We are asking everyone who watches her video to share it, and to stand with her until her children are home."

How to help

Watch and share Zeynab's message at justiceforzeynab.com. Follow her on X at @ZeynabJavadli and on Instagram at @zeynabismyname. Use #JusticeForZeynab, #16Days and #OrangeTheWorld.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The video: "Message to the United Nations", 1 minute 10 seconds, recorded on 25 November 2026, with a full transcript, is available at justiceforzeynab.com and on request. Ms Javadli's earlier video message to the UN, released on 19 November 2026, and the press release of that date are at davidhaigh.co.uk/zeynab-javadli-un-complaint/.

2. The UN complaint: a Further Urgent Communication to the UN Special Procedures (the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the Special Rapporteurs on torture, on freedom of expression and on the independence of judges and lawyers, and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls) was filed on 18 November 2026 by Rodney Dixon KC of Temple Garden Chambers.

3. The criminal case: Case No. 21630/2026, Dubai Court of First Instance (Misdemeanours, Family Circuit). Ms Javadli and her mother are charged under Article 380 of the UAE Penal Code with the abduction of a child by a parent or grandparent from the person entitled to custody. At the hearing on 25 November 2026 the court adjourned the case for judgment on 9 December 2026.

4. The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence run from 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10 December, Human Rights Day. The 2026 UN theme is "Ensure justice, protect survivors, end impunity".

5. Previous coverage includes the Daily Mail (19 November 2026), The Sun (19 November 2026) and Musavat (19 November 2026).

PRESS CONTACTS

David Haigh, international human rights lawyer, for Ms Javadli: +44 (0)7488 868000, david@davidhaigh.co.uk