

I was shocked and upset to see my husband, Xiyue Wang, misrepresented on Iranian state television. The video suggested that my husband entered Iran under the guise of a language student, without making his interest in historical research known. This is not true. While Wang was very interested in improving his Farsi, he openly and honestly disclosed his interest in historical research to Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, the Ministry issued a reference letter to him to help him do research for his PhD dissertation, a comparative history on the regional governance practice of Turkmans under the rule of Imperial Russia and the Qajar dynasty in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

When Wang arrived at the archives, he conducted himself in an equally straightforward and respectful way. He first submitted his passport, research plan, and approval letters to the archives, and his research was approved by the head of the archives. Then, following his stated plan, he browsed the digital summaries of documents from between 1880 and 1921 on the computer in the archive's reading room, then submitted selected document numbers for review and approval. The librarian reviewed the application and gave him 1200 pages of documents scanned to a disk (not 4500 pages, as the video falsely suggested). No document he received was marked as confidential.

Wang is a student. He was not working on behalf of any government agency. Like any other graduate student in history at Princeton, Wang developed his own dissertation topic in conversation with his advisor, Steven Kotkin, who is a well-respected scholar. Looking at the emails Wang sent me and Professor Kotkin during his archival research in Tehran, I see only his enthusiasm for the historical subject of how the Qajar state in the 19th century managed Turkmen raiders living on the border of Iran, a subject that could not possibly be classified. Any person who thinks Wang collected these documents as a spy has made a grave error. The investigators' characterization of Wang's peaceful historical research as espionage are incorrect.

Wang is a scholar driven by intellectual curiosity, not a spy. As a researcher, he conducted himself with integrity and honor. He should not be used as a political pawn and become a bearer/sacrifice of the burden in Iran US politics. As a husband and a father, he has been away from his family for far too long. I have been in this crisis for 17 months. He deserves to be treated fairly, and should be released from his unjust detention as soon as possible. My son and I are waiting for him to come home.