

Elderly British Couple Held in Taliban Custody for Six Months as Family Grows Increasingly Concerned

August 2, 2025

– Categories: Human Rights



Download IPFS

An elderly British couple, Peter and Barbie Reynolds, have been detained by the Taliban in Afghanistan for six months without any formal charges. Their family, increasingly anxious as communication has ceased and health concerns mount, fears for their safety and well-being.

Peter Reynolds, aged 80, and his wife, Barbie, 76, were detained in February while returning to their residence in Bamiyan province. Alongside them were their Chinese-American friend, Faye Hall, who was released in March, and an Afghan translator. The Taliban have yet to provide any explanation for the arrest, despite earlier assurances that the couple had not been charged with any crime. According to the family, an Afghan judge reportedly stated they were not guilty of any offence.

The couple have deep ties to Afghanistan. Married in Kabul in 1970, they spent nearly two decades living in the country, becoming naturalised Afghan citizens and running educational initiatives under their organisation, *Rebuild*. Their work primarily focused on improving access to education for women and children.

Since their detention, conditions have reportedly been harsh. According to United Nations independent human rights experts, the Reynolds were initially held in a high-security prison, then in underground cells without daylight, and are now under the custody of Taliban intelligence in Kabul. The experts warned that the couple's physical and mental health is deteriorating and that they may face irreparable harm or even death.

Their son, Jonathan Reynolds, based in Chicago, has not had contact with his parents since a brief phone call on June 15. Speaking to *Agence France-Presse (AFP)*, he expressed fear and frustration, saying, "I don't know if they're still alive... Who's going to call me? The Taliban's never called me."

He also expressed serious concerns about the health of both parents. Peter Reynolds, who has a history of heart issues, has suffered two eye infections and tremors during his time in custody. He reportedly requires medical examinations, including an electrocardiogram (ECG), blood tests and CT scans. Barbie Reynolds, according to Jonathan, has become severely malnourished and anaemic after allegedly receiving only one meal per day in prison. The UN experts described her condition as "weak and fragile."

The family has launched a campaign website, *Free Peter and Barbie*, to advocate for their release and raise awareness of their ongoing detention.

Despite the international outcry, the Taliban have maintained that the couple's case is "not serious" and claimed the pair are being treated humanely. In April, the Taliban Interior Ministry stated it hoped to resolve the matter soon. More recently, Foreign Minister Amir

Khan Muttaqi said the couple has received medical care and occasional contact with family, although their son disputes this.