

URGENT ACTION

DETAINED HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER SENTENCED

Iranian human rights lawyer **Nasrin Sotoudeh**, a mother of two children aged 10 and three, was sentenced on 9 January to 11 years in prison and has been banned from practising law and leaving the country for 20 years. She is a prisoner of conscience, held solely in connection with her work as a lawyer, who should be released immediately and unconditionally.

Nasrin Sotoudeh was sentenced to 10 years in prison on the charge of “acting against national security, including membership of the Centre for Human Rights Defenders (CHRD)” (a human rights organization forcibly closed by the authorities) and one year for “propaganda against the system.” Nasrin Sotoudeh denies that she has ever been a member of the CHRD. These charges stem solely from her work as a human rights lawyer. On the same day as Nasrin Sotoudeh’s sentencing was issued, Branch One of the Revolutionary Court based inside Evin Prison (where Nasrin Sotoudeh is held) summoned her husband, Reza Khandan, to report for interrogation within seven days. Her lawyer, Nasim Ghanavi, has also reportedly been summoned.

Since her arrest on 4 September 2010, Nasrin Sotoudeh has been mostly held in solitary confinement in Tehran’s Evin Prison. Her health has been weakened by three hunger strikes in protest at her detention without charge or trial and at her conditions of detention. Initially allowed very infrequent contact with her family and lawyer, she is now allowed to call her family once a week. Nasrin Sotoudeh’s two children have been allowed to visit her on only two occasions but only behind a glass screen (a “cabin”) and her husband, Reza Khandan, is now permitted to visit her once a fortnight.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Persian, English, or your own language:

- Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Nasrin Sotoudeh, imprisoned solely for her peaceful exercise of her rights to freedom of expression and association, including her work as a lawyer;
- Urging the Iranian authorities to ensure that Nasrin Sotoudeh is granted immediate and regular access to her family and her lawyer, including regular visits by her children allowing them physical contact with her;
- Reminding the Iranian authorities that UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers not only state that lawyers must be allowed to carry out their work “without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference” but also expressly recognizes that they are entitled to freedom of expression, which includes “the right to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights”.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 FEBRUARY 2011 TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic

Ayatollah Sayed ‘Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader
Islamic Republic Street – End of
Shahid Keshvar Doust Street, Tehran,
Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: info_leader@leader.ir
via website:
[http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/index.php?](http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/index.php?p=letter)
[p=letter](http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/index.php?p=letter) (English)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
[care of] Public relations Office
Number 4, 2 Azizi Street
Vali Asr Ave., above Pasteur Street
intersection
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: bia.judi@yahoo.com

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Secretary General, High Council for
Human Rights.
Mohammad Javad Larijani
High Council for Human Rights
[Care of] Office of the Head of the
Judiciary, Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave.
south of Serah-e Jomhuri, Tehran
1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: info@humanrights-iran.ir (In subject
line: FAO Mohammad Javad Larijani)

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Iran accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update of UA 197/10. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/087/2010/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Nasrin Sotoudeh has defended many high profile human rights campaigners and political activists, as well as juvenile offenders on death row. Her clients include Nobel Peace Laureate Shirin Ebadi. Her hunger strikes included three days in which she drank no water (a “dry” hunger strike).

Nasrin Sotoudeh’s lawyer, Nasim Ghanavi, has faced pressure from the authorities, including threats of arrest, apparently on account of her representation of Nasrin Sotoudeh. Since Nasrin Sotoudeh’s 11-year prison sentence was issued, both Nasim Ghanavi and Reza Khandan, Nasrin Sotoudeh’s husband, have been summoned to Branch One of Evin Prison for interrogation.

Following the 2009 post-election political unrest in Iran, the authorities have cracked down on human rights defenders and activists. Prominent human rights defender Emaddin Baghi, the recipient of the 2009 Martin Ennals award, is serving a seven-year prison sentence, six years of which were imposed for conducting an interview with the late Ayatollah Montazeri. On 9 January 2011, journalist and human rights activist Shiva Nazar Ahari, a member of the now-banned Committee of Human Rights Reporters (CHRR), had a four-year prison sentence for “enmity against God” and “propaganda against the system” upheld on appeal. A further two-year prison sentence for “gathering and colluding with intent to harm state security” was overturned. She is currently at liberty but expected to be summoned to start serving this final sentence soon. Several other CHRR members are also facing imprisonment or have fled the country for their own safety. Other organizations whose members have been arrested or sentenced include the Committee for the Defence of Political Prisoners in Iran, Human Rights Activists in Iran and the Committee of Human Rights Reporters. Student activists and leaders have also been targeted.

Lawyers have been the latest victims of this ongoing clampdown on human rights defenders and activists. In addition to Nasrin Sotoudeh, Mohammad Olyaeifard, a lawyer and board member of the Committee for the Defence of Political Prisoners in Iran, a human rights organization, is currently serving a one-year prison sentence for speaking out about the execution of one of his clients, a juvenile offender (see Iran urged to release lawyer imprisoned for criticizing juvenile’s execution, 6 May 2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/iran-urged-release-lawyer-imprisoned-criticizing-juveniles-execution-2010-05-06>). Mohammad Olyaeifard is in poor health. Last year, on 30 October 2010, prominent lawyer Mohammad Seyfzadeh was sentenced to nine years in prison and banned from practicing law for 10 years. He is currently free pending an appeal.

Prior to her arrest, Nasrin Sotoudeh’s assets were frozen and she was summoned to the tax office. Afterwards, she said she had seen that 30 other lawyers had cases of tax irregularities being prepared against them, in what would appear to be a concerted effort by the authorities to prevent these lawyers from continuing their work. (For further information, see Iran: Lawyers’ defence work repaid with loss of freedom, Index: MDE 13/093/2010, 1 October 2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/093/2010/en>)

On 23 November 2010, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanetham Pillay, expressed concern for Nasrin Sotoudeh. She called her case part of a much broader crackdown on human rights defenders. The UN High Commissioner urged the Iranian authorities to review her case urgently and expedite her release.

The UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers provide that lawyers must be allowed to carry out their work “without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference.” In addition, it affirms the right of lawyers to freedom of expression, also provided for in Article 19 of the ICCPR, which includes “the right to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights”.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Lawyers and Judges has not been permitted to visit the country despite the Standing Invitation issued by Iran to all UN human rights mechanisms in 2002.

Further information on UA: 197/10 Index: MDE 13/005/2011 Issue Date: 13 January 2011

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