URGENT ACTION

HOMA HOODFAR FREED AFTER GLOBAL CAMPAIGN

Canadian-Irish-Iranian citizen Dr Homa Hoodfar, a prominent professor of anthropology, was released on 26 September and flown out of Iran to Oman. She had been detained in solitary confinement in Tehran's Evin Prison since her arbitrary arrest on 6 June.

Canadian-Irish-Iranian citizen **Homa Hoodfar**, a 65-year-old prisoner of conscience on whom Amnesty International had campaigned since her arrest on 6 June, was released from Tehran's Evin Prison on 26 September and was flown to Muscat in Oman the same day. The judiciary spokesperson Gholamhossein Mohseni Eje'I told journalists on 28 September that Homa Hoodfar had been released from prison after making a bail payment of five billion rials (US$ 159,000). The news of her release first broke on 26 September when Iranian state media reported an announcement made by Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Bahram Ghassemi, during his weekly press conference, who said that Homa Hoodfar had been released on "humanitarian grounds, such as [her] illness" and that she would be returning to Canada via Oman.

Bahram Ghassemi also said that Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad Javad Zarif and his Canadian counterpart Stéphane Dion had met on 21 September on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York where they discussed "mutual relations, regional issues, and consular affairs." He said that the meeting had been part of a plan to bring the strained relations between the two countries to normalcy. Canada has had no diplomatic presence in Iran since 2012 when it closed its embassy in Tehran. In a statement issued on 26 September, Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that in the absence of diplomatic representation in Iran, Canada had worked closely with Oman, Italy and Switzerland to secure Homa Hoodfar's release. He also said that he recognized the cooperation of those Iranian authorities who facilitated Homa Hoodfar's release and repatriation.

Homa Hoodfar, who is renowned for her academic work on issues related to women's rights, development and electoral politics, had travelled to Iran on 11 February to visit her family and conduct research on women's participation in elections since 1906. Following her arrest, she was held in solitary confinement and interrogated without a lawyer present. She was allowed just one meeting with her lawyer and very limited access to her family. The judicial authorities refused to share her case file with her lawyer and only told him verbally the charges she faced, including "spreading propaganda against the system" and "collaborating with hostile governments". On 24 June 2016, the Prosecutor General of Tehran stated that Homa Hoodfar's "criminal" case was in connection with "her entry into fields concerning feminism and national security offences". State media outlets also ran articles claiming that she was "the Iran agent of a feminist network building operation". The articles claimed that her work with the organization Women Living Under Muslim Laws to promote feminism and women's equality in Muslim countries and enhance women's bodily autonomy was aimed at "disrupting public order" and "prompting social-cultural changes that can ultimately pave the ground… for a soft overthrow". Her trial was held before Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran but it remains unclear whether the charges against her have been dropped.

Amnesty International considered Homa Hoodfar a prisoner of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of her rights to freedom of expression and association, and called for her immediate and unconditional release. The organization mobilized tens of thousands of its members to take action, which resulted in the collection of over 50,000 signatures in a petition calling for Homa Hoodfar's release which was sent to the Iranian authorities.

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the second update of UA 137/16. Further information: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE13/4787/2016/en/

Name: Homa Hoodfar
Gender m/f: f

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