

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER ON HUNGER STRIKE

Iranian human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh has been on hunger strike since the morning of 17 October in protest at the authorities' denial of her repeated requests to have face-to-face meetings with her family. She is a prisoner of conscience and should be released immediately and unconditionally.

Prisoner of conscience **Nasrin Sotoudeh**, who is serving a six-year prison sentence in Tehran's Evin Prison for her human rights work, has been denied permission to have face-to-face visitations with her 13-year-old daughter and five-year-old son. In the last three months, she has been restricted to family visits in a "cabin" (behind a glass screen) after the prison authorities discovered she had been writing a defence for her upcoming court hearing on a piece of tissue paper. She has not been allowed to make phone calls for the past year.

Nasrin Sotoudeh's health, which has already weakened as result of her previous hunger strikes, has deteriorated further. She was transferred to Evin Prison's clinic on 22 October. However, she has told her family that she will continue her hunger strike until the authorities' pressure on her family is lifted, in particular the travel ban imposed on her 13-year-old daughter. In July, Nasrin Sotoudeh's husband **Reza Khandan** and their daughter received an order informing them that they were banned from travelling; this appears to have resulted from a case that had been opened against them. Reza Khandan has been subjected to harassment, including an overnight detention in Evin Prison in January 2011 for his advocacy on his wife's behalf.

Please write immediately in Persian, Arabic, 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 them that the harassment and arrest of family members of prisoners, solely in order to stop their public campaigning, amounts to reprisals that violate Iran's obligations as a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to uphold freedom of expression.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 7 DECEMBER 2012 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

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: info@dadiran.ir (Subject line: FAO
Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani) or
info_leader@leader.ir

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
(subject line: FAO Mohammad Javad
Larijani)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the fifth update of UA 197/10. Further information:
<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/007/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 9 January 2011, Nasrin Sotoudeh was sentenced to 11 years in prison by Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court for “spreading propaganda against the system” and “acting against national security”, including membership of the Centre for Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) – an organization co-founded by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi. Nasrin Sotoudeh's 11-year prison sentence was reduced to six years on appeal by Branch 54 of the Appeals Court. She has denied all charges against her, including membership of the CHRD. She has also received a ban from practising law and travelling for 20 years, which was reduced to 10 years on appeal. She was reportedly fined for not wearing a head scarf, which is mandatory for women to wear in public under the state-imposed dress code, in a video tape. Since her arrest on 4 September 2010, Nasrin Sotoudeh has been detained in Evin Prison, including a lengthy period in solitary confinement. Her health has also been weakened as a result of three previous hunger strikes held in protest against her arrest and detention conditions. Her hunger strikes included three days of “dry” hunger striking (refusing water in addition to food).

Nasrin Sotoudeh's family has faced pressures from the authorities in order to stop their public campaigning on her behalf. Reza Khandan, Nasrin Sotoudeh's husband, was held overnight in Evin Prison after being summoned to appear at the office of Tehran's Prosecutor at the prison on 16 January 2011. He was questioned while blindfolded and asked to put two of his replies in writing. He was told that he was accused of “publishing lies” and “disturbing public opinion” on account of an unpublished letter he wrote to the Prosecutor's Office in which he complained about the conditions of detention of his wife. He was released on 17 January on a bail worth 500 million Iranian Rials (about US\$50,000).

Following the 2009 post-election political unrest in Iran, the authorities have cracked down on human rights defenders and activists. Among victims of this ongoing clampdown have been lawyers. In addition to Nasrin Sotoudeh, Abdolfattah Soltani, a founding member of the CHRD, had his imprisonment sentence reduced from 18 years to 13 years by Branch 54 of the Appeal Court of Tehran in June 2012. He is currently serving his prison term in Evin Prison, along with another member of the CHRD, Mohammad Ali Dadkhah, who began serving a nine-year prison sentence in September 2012 after being convicted of charges including “membership of an association” (CHDR), “seeking the soft overthrow of the government” and “spreading propaganda against the system through interviews with foreign media”. He was also banned from practising law and teaching for 10 years.

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”.

On 26 October 2012, Nasrin Sotoudeh was awarded the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, along with fellow Iranian Ja'far Panahi – a world-renowned film director – who is himself facing a six-year prison sentence and is banned from film-making for his peaceful criticism of the Iranian authorities.

See also Amnesty International Netherlands' campaign on Nasrin Sotoudeh at: <http://www.4weeksforfreedom.nl/>

Names: Nasrin Sotoudeh (f), Reza Khandan (m)

Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 197/10 Index: MDE 13/067/2012 Issue Date: 26 October 2012

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