

URGENT ACTION

CRITICALLY ILL LAWYER RETURNED TO EVIN PRISON

Prominent human rights lawyer Abdolfattah Soltani was returned to Tehran's Evin Prison on 7 June after he went on prison leave following his mother's death. He is a critically ill prisoner of conscience serving a 13-year prison sentence for his human rights work. He cannot receive the adequate medical care he needs inside prison.

Prisoner of conscience **Abdolfattah Soltani**, a prominent human rights lawyer sentenced to 13 years in prison for his human rights work, was returned to Tehran's Evin Prison on 7 June. He had been released on temporary compassionate leave on 17 May after his mother passed away just hours earlier on the same day. Prior to his release, Abdolfattah Soltani had made numerous requests for leave in order to spend time with his dying elderly mother but prison authorities had delayed his release. According to his doctors, Abdolfattah Soltani may be at elevated risk of a heart attack due to being denied adequate medical care while he has been in prison. He has been transferred to the prison clinic several times because of chest pains and severe heart palpitations, but he has been returned to his prison cell each time after either having received no treatment or having simply been given drugs, such as aspirin and propranolol to regulate his heart rhythm. Since his imprisonment, the prosecution authorities have repeatedly refused to authorize his medical leave or transfer to hospital, even though his doctors have advised that he needs ongoing care and observation outside prison and said that the harsh prison conditions are aggravating his high blood pressure and rapid heart rate.

Abdolfattah Soltani suffers from several other health problems, including digestive problems, which resulted in his admission as an emergency patient to hospital in 2013. He also has a herniated disc in his back. Although his wife has booked several sessions of physiotherapy for him, the authorities have not ensured that he is taken to his scheduled appointments on time. As a result, he has missed some of his appointments, forcing him to wait several weeks until his wife can book another one. His wife's almost weekly requests for medical leave have been routinely ignored by the judicial authorities.

Abdolfattah Soltani was sentenced on charges including "spreading propaganda against the system" in relation to his human rights work and "founding an illegal group" for his involvement as one of the founders of the Centre for Human Rights Defenders in Iran, forcibly closed in 2008. He has been held in Tehran's Evin Prison since his arrest in September 2011.

Please write immediately in Persian, English, Arabic, French, Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to release Abdolfattah Soltani immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association, including his work as a defence lawyer;
- Urging them to ensure that he is immediately granted access to the adequate medical care he needs outside prison.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 JULY 2016 TO:

Office of the Supreme Leader
Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary
Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
President
Hassan Rouhani

Please send your appeals to the care of diplomatic representatives accredited to your country, listed below. If there is no Iranian embassy in your country, please mail the letter to the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, 622 Third Avenue, 34th Floor, New York, NY 10017, USA. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Abdolfattah Soltani's digestive problems resulted in his admission as an emergency patient to hospital in 2013. After spending 41 days in hospital, due to his family being forced to pay for his medical care and his request for medical leave not being approved by the authorities, he requested to be returned to prison. The authorities had refused to grant him medical leave, despite advice from prison doctors. The Associate Prosecutor of Evin Prison has generally refused Abdolfattah Soltani's requests for medical leave and transfer to hospital without providing any reasons. However, on one occasion, Abdolfattah Soltani's family was told that the Prosecutor General, to whom the Associate Prosecutor of Evin Prison reports, is opposed to granting him medical leave because Abdolfattah Soltani remains "steadfast" in his beliefs.

Abdolfattah Soltani's daughter, Maedeh Soltani, has said: "Over the years, my mother has made so many requests for my father's medical leave that she could probably publish a multi-volume book with these written requests. She puts in a request for my father's medical leave almost every week. However, the Associate Prosecutor of the Prison does not pay any attention to her requests. He only takes the letters and says that they will be processed. Shouldn't a prisoner's health receive attention? The life of a human being is at stake."

Abdolfattah Soltani is a prominent and award-winning human rights lawyer and one of the founders of the Centre for Human Rights Defenders in Iran. He was awarded the International Bar Association's Human Rights Award in 2012, as well as the Nuremberg International Human Rights Award in 2009. Abdolfattah Soltani was first arrested on 16 June 2009, during the unrest that followed the disputed presidential election. He was held in Tehran's Evin Prison until 26 August 2009 when he was released on bail secured by property deeds of considerable value. During this detention period, his access to his family was limited to one visit and several telephone calls. Abdolfattah Soltani was rearrested by intelligence officials on 10 September 2011 when he was in a Revolutionary Court dealing with the case of a client. The intelligence officials then escorted him to his home, where they confiscated computers, documents, bank cards, family albums, and CDs and DVDs before taking him away to Section 209 of Evin Prison, which is under the control of the Ministry of Intelligence.

In November 2011, Iran's Secretary General of the High Council for Human Rights, Mohammad Javad Larijani, told a press conference held at the UN in New York: "no lawyer is in prison because he is a lawyer or he is a defender of human rights, but because they are involved in activities which are against the security of the state, especially their relations with terrorist groups... Mr. Abdolfattah Soltani has relations with terrorist groups which are responsible for murdering more than 10,000 people in Iran."

In March 2012, Abdolfattah Soltani was informed that Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran had sentenced him to 18 years' imprisonment on several charges, including "spreading propaganda against the system", "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security", and "founding an illegal group". The charges were connected entirely to his human rights work, including his involvement in the founding of the Centre for Human Rights Defenders. He was also convicted of "accepting an illegal prize and illegal earnings" related to his acceptance, via his wife Massoumeh Dehghan, of the Nuremberg International Human Rights Award. The court also barred him from practising law for 20 years, and ordered him to serve his sentence in exile in Barazjan, south of Iran. In June 2012, Branch 54 of the Appeal Court of Tehran reduced his sentence to 13 years' imprisonment and reduced the length of the ban on practising law from 20 years to two years.

Name: Abdolfattah Soltani
Gender m/f: m