

URGENT ACTION

UN CALLS FOR RELEASE OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER

On 23 November the UN human rights chief called for the release of Iranian human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh. This followed the first trial session on 15 November. She has now been held for 80 days, following her arbitrary arrest on 4 September 2010. Amnesty International considers her to be a prisoner of conscience, held solely in connection with her work as a lawyer.

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

At the 15 November trial session Nasrin Sotoudeh faced charges of acting against national security; gathering and colluding to disturb national security; and co-operation with a human rights body, the Centre for Human Rights Defenders (CHRD). She was permitted to see her husband face-to-face, albeit in a crowded room full of officials. It lasted around 15 minutes and he found his wife thin and frail. She had ended a month-long hunger strike on 26 October, but resumed it on 31 October, extending it to a 'dry' hunger strike, refusing also water. Her husband urged her to end the hunger strike, which she did. The first time he was permitted to see her following her arrest was five days before that, sitting opposite his wife behind the glass in Evin Prison's visiting area, where they spoke via a telephone. He, along with other family members and the head of the Tehran Bar Association were not, however, allowed in the court. A session for 24 November was cancelled due to high levels of pollution in Tehran.

Nasrin Sotoudeh has represented clients ranging from juvenile offenders facing the death penalty to Nobel Peace Laureate Shirin Ebadi and prior to her arrest spoke openly of the challenges she faced as a lawyer in Iran. International standards for fair trial are routinely flouted in Iran's courts.

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

- Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Nasrin Sotoudeh, held solely for her peaceful exercise of her rights to freedom of expression and association, including her work as a lawyer;
- Calling on the Iranian authorities to ensure that she is protected from torture or other ill-treatment while held, and she is granted immediate and regular access to her family including her husband, and her lawyer;
- Urging the Iranian authorities to act on the UN's call to review her case urgently and expedite her release in advance of a UN-backed judicial seminar to be held in Tehran on 1-2 December, addressing fair trial issues and the treatment of detainees.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 05 JANUARY 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](#) (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: Via website: <http://www.bia-judiciary.ir/tabid/62/Default.aspx>; **2nd box (starred)=first name, 3rd box (starred)=family name, 5th box (starred)=email address, last box=**substance of message
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Director, Human Rights Headquarters of Iran

Mohammad Javad Larijani
Bureau of International Affairs, Office of the Head of the Judiciary, Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave. south of Serah-e Jomhuri, Tehran 1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: bia.judi@yahoo.com
Fax: + 98 21 5 537 8827 (please keep trying)

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 second update of UA 197/10. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/099/2010/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The court session scheduled for 24 November 2010 in Branch 26 of Tehran's Revolutionary Court was cancelled due to high levels of pollution in Tehran and all government offices were closed. Up to eight further days are expected to be needed to arrange a follow up session.

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.. In the days before the 15 November trial session, Nasrin Sotoudeh was permitted to meet an additional lawyer, Abdolfattah Soltani.

In her statement on 23 November, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, also expressed renewed concern for the fate of human rights defenders in Iran, noting that that Nasrin Sotoudeh's case is part of a much broader crackdown, and that the situation of human rights defenders in Iran is growing more and more difficult. She referred to those associated with the now banned Centre for Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) a human rights body co-founded by Nobel Laureate, Shirin Ebadi, citing Mohammad Sayfzadeh. A lawyer and co-founder of CHRD, he was sentenced to nine years in prison and a ten-year ban on practicing law for "forming an association whose aim is to harm national security." Other members of CHRD are being prosecuted on similar charges, or have been detained for shorter periods and prevented from travelling abroad, including Nasrin Sotoudeh's lawyer, Abdolfattah Soltani.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay also referred to the 13 November 2010 arrest of five lawyers in Tehran, on security charges. Although two, Maryam Karbasi and Roza Gharachalou, were reportedly subsequently released, the other three, Sara Sabaghian, Maryam Kian Ersi and Mohammad Hossein Nayri, are believed to be still in custody. On 13 November 2010, Amnesty International wrote to the Iranian authorities expressing concern at the arrest of five Iranian lawyers and called for their immediate, unconditional release if they are held solely on account of their legitimate exercise of their human rights.

Recent months have seen increased persecution of defence lawyers. Mohammad Olyaeifard, a lawyer and board member of the Committee for the Defence of Political Prisoners in Iran, a human rights organization, is 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.

Prior to her arrest, Nasrin Sotoudeh's assets were frozen and she was summoned to the tax office. Afterwards, she told the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran 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>)

Other organizations whose members have been arrested or convicted in recent months include the Committee for the Defence of Political Prisoners in Iran and the Committee of Human Rights Reporters. Student activists and leaders have also been targeted. In her 23 November statement, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights urged the Iranian authorities to review their cases as well.

Further information on UA: 197/10 Index: MDE 13/106/2010 Issue Date: 05 November 2010

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