



ELDH European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights

EJDM Europäische Vereinigung von Juristinnen & Juristen für Demokratie und Menschenrechte in der Welt
EJDH Asociación Europea de los Juristas por la Democracia y los Derechos Humanos en el Mundo
EJDH Association Européenne des Juristes pour la Démocratie & les Droits de l'Homme
EGDU Associazione Europea delle Giuriste e dei Giuristi per la Democrazia e i diritti dell'Uomo nel Mondo



Equality Privacy Social Rights
No Racism Peace No Torture No War
Self-Determination of Peoples Civil Rights Democracy
Human Rights Rights of Migrants

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European lawyers demand the release of their Iranian colleague Nasrin Sotoudeh

As the European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDH) with members in 21 European countries, we draw your attention to the worsening health condition of the Iranian lawyer and human rights activist Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh. On 11 March 2019 Ms. Sotoudeh was sentenced in absentia by the Islamic Revolutionary Court in Tehran to 148 lashes and 38 years in prison, in two cases related to her work against the death penalty, and her support of the movement against compulsory wearing of the hijab. She received the European Union's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 2012, and was recently awarded a human rights prize by the German Judges Association, calling her "a symbol of the Iranian civil rights movement.". The former President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz of the European Parliament called her "a woman who did not bow before fear and intimidation and who decided to put the fate of her country before her own".

Previously, as Covid-19 spread in Iran, Ms. Sotoudeh went on hunger strike for several weeks, starting on 17 March 2020, to protest the fact that human rights defenders were excluded from the release of the 70,000 prisoners who were granted temporary release due to the pandemic.

For over 50 days Ms. Sotoudeh - has been on hunger strike to obtain the release of the political prisoners, held in inhuman conditions during the Covid-19 pandemic, and continues to claim her her right to fight for women's rights. Since 2018 she has been detained after having already served three years in prison between 2010 and 2013, and will have to serve at least another 12 years for the most severe of the sentences imposed on her. In a report submitted to the UN General Assembly's 75th session on 21 July, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Professor Javaid Rehman, mentioned Ms. Sotoudeh's March 2020 hunger strike and called on the Iranian authorities: "To ensure that human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders,

ELDH European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights
President: Professor Bill Bowring, London | E-Mail: bill.bowring@eldh.eu | Phone +44 (0)781 048 34 39
Présidente d'honneur: Professeure Monique Chemillier-Gendreau, Paris
Secretary General: Thomas Schmidt (lawyer), Düsseldorf | E-Mail: thomas.schmidt@eldh.eu |
Phone +49 (0)172 68 10 888
Postal address: ELDH | Thomas Schmidt | Platanenstrasse 13 | D – 40233 Düsseldorf (Germany)
Website: www.eldh.eu

lawyers, journalists, environmentalists and dual and foreign nationals, are not threatened with or subjected to intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrests, deprivation of liberty or other arbitrary sanctions; release all those detained in connection with their work; and extend the policy for the temporary release of prisoners in the context of COVID-19 to those individuals, as well as other detainees who pose no threat to public safety.”

On 19 September 2020 news was received that Ms. Sotoudeh has been transferred to the Telaghani hospital in Tehran for heart failure, and concerns about her state of health are increasing by the hour, considered "the physical weakening, heart palpitations and wheezing", as related to the BBC Persian Service by her husband Reza Khandan. We insist that the European Union cannot limit itself to non-binding declarations of support for the actions of such women and men who courageously risk their lives for the protection of human rights and the right to free expression of thought . We expect the European Union, as an organization that gives special weight to human rights, to use all its political and economic influence on the Iranian government so that Mrs. Sotoudeh, as well as other political prisoners in Iran, are released and are not forced into a life-threatening situation by the increased risk of infection in prison.

ELDH urges the authorities in Iran to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally to release Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh, Ms. Narges Mohammadi, Ms. Atena Daemi, Ms. Saba Kordafshari, Ms. Yasaman Aryani, Ms. Monireh Arabshahi and Ms. Mojgan Keshavarz, along with all human rights defenders and activists in Iran.
2. To stop arbitrarily arresting human rights defenders and their family members for their participation in peaceful human rights activities, including women’s rights advocacy; and
3. To guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Iran are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.