



To:

Ms. Margaret Satterthwaite
UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers

Ms. Mary Lawlor
UN Special Rapporteur on the situation
of Human Rights Defenders

Ms. Mai Sato
UN Special Rapporteur on the Islamic Republic of Iran

Mr. Alain Berset
Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Mr. Michael O'Flaherty
Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe

Ms. Roberta Metsola
President of the European Parliament

Mr. António Costa
President of the European Council

Ms. Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

Ms. Kaja Kallas
High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
of the European Commission

Mr. Javier Zarzalejos
President LIBE Committee of the European Parliament

EEAS Iran Division

Re: Urgent call for intervention concerning the renewed arrest of Nasrin Sotoudeh and the continuing detention of Reza Khandan

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

The undersigned organisations of the Coalition for the International Day of the Endangered Lawyer express their gravest concern at the renewed arrest of **Nasrin Sotoudeh**, one of Iran's most prominent human rights lawyers and one of the most respected members of the international legal community.¹ According to multiple recent reports, during the night of 1–2 April 2026 Ms Sotoudeh was arrested at her home in Tehran by agents reportedly affiliated with the Ministry of Intelligence, her electronic devices were confiscated, and she was taken to an undisclosed location. Her family were not promptly informed of her whereabouts, and the legal basis for her detention has not been transparently communicated.²

¹ For concise background on Ms Sotoudeh's professional work and her international recognition, see European Parliament, *Nasrin Sotoudeh – 2012, Iran (Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought)*, available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/sakharovprize/en/nasrin-sotoudeh-2012-iran/products-details/20200331CAN54204>; European Parliament, *Nasrin Sotoudeh and Jafar Panahi – winners of the 2012 Sakharov Prize* (26 October 2012), available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20121024IPR54366/nasrin-sotoudeh-and-jafar-panahi-winners-of-the-2012-sakharov-prize>; PEN America, *Nasrin Sotoudeh, Recipient of the 2011 PEN/Barbara Goldsmith Freedom to Write Award*, available at: <https://pen.org/nasrin-sotoudeh-recipient-of-the-2011-penbarbara-goldsmith-freedom-to-write-award/>; the Ludovic-Trarieux International Human Rights Prize, *Nasrin Sotoudeh (Iran), prizewinner of the 2018 prize*, available at: <https://www.ludovictrarieux.org/uk-page3.callplt2018.htm>; CCBE, *Human Rights Award – 2019*, available at: <https://www.ccbe.eu/actions/human-rights-portal/human-rights-award/>; Right Livelihood, *Nasrin Sotoudeh*, available at: <https://rightlivelihood.org/the-change-makers/find-a-laureate/nasrin-sotoudeh/>; American Bar Association Center for Human Rights, *Nasrin Sotoudeh* (2020 Eleanor Roosevelt Prize for Global Human Rights Advancement), available at: https://www.americanbar.org/groups/human_rights/events/eleanor-roosevelt-prize-for-global-human-rights-advancement/virtual2020erprizeawards/nasrinsotoudeh/; American Bar Association, *Eleanor Roosevelt Prize awarded to Fauci, King and Sotoudeh* (11 January 2021), available at: <https://www.americanbar.org/news/abanews/aba-news-archives/2021/01/roosevelt-award/>; U.S. Department of State, *Annual Global Human Rights Defender Award Recipients Announced* (1 February 2023), available at: <https://2021-2025.state.gov/annual-global-human-rights-defender-award-recipients-announced/>; U.S. Department of State, *Recognizing Global Human Rights Defender Awardees* (16 February 2023), available at: <https://2021-2025.state.gov/dipnote-recognizing-global-human-rights-defender-awardees-2023/>.

² See IAPL Monitoring Committee on Attacks on Lawyers, *Iran: Prominent human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh arrested last night* (2 April 2026), available at: <https://defendlawyers.wordpress.com/2026/04/02/iran-prominent-human-rights-lawyer-nasrin-sotoudeh-arrested-last-night/>; Iran Human Rights, *Human Rights Lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh Arrested* (2 April 2026), available at:

The Coalition is equally concerned by the continuing detention of **Reza Khandan**, Ms Sotoudeh's husband and himself a human rights defender. Mr Khandan has been detained since 13 December 2024 and is currently held in Evin Prison in connection with his peaceful advocacy, including opposition to compulsory veiling rules. His detention, together with the renewed targeting of Ms Sotoudeh, demonstrates a broader pattern of pressure directed not only at a lawyer because of her professional and human rights work, but also at her family because of their peaceful civic engagement.³

Nasrin Sotoudeh's case cannot be viewed in isolation. For well over a decade, she has been subjected to repeated arrest, prosecution, imprisonment, travel restrictions, professional sanctions and other forms of judicial harassment in apparent retaliation for the legitimate exercise of her profession and her peaceful defence of fundamental rights. She has represented political prisoners, women prosecuted for opposing compulsory hijab laws, journalists, religious and ethnic minorities, children facing the death penalty, and other persons at acute risk of injustice. Her arrest in October 2023 while attending the funeral of Armita Garawand, and the international outcry that followed, already showed the determination of the Iranian authorities to punish independent lawyers and human rights defenders who refuse to be silenced.⁴

This latest arrest, taken together with the continuing imprisonment of Reza Khandan, raises serious concerns under the most basic international standards protecting liberty, fair trial rights, privacy, freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and the independence of the legal profession. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention and protects the rights to a fair hearing, privacy, expression, assembly and association. The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders affirms both the right of every person to promote and strive for the protection of human rights and the State's duty to protect those who do so. The UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers and the recently adopted Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer require that lawyers be able to perform all of their

<https://iranhr.net/en/articles/8665/>; International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and League for the Defence of Human Rights in Iran (LDDHI), *Iran: Human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh arbitrarily arrested amid intensified crackdown* (3 April 2026), available at: <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/asia/iran/iran-human-rights-lawyer-nasrin-sotoudeh-arbitrarily-arrested-amid>; Front Line Defenders, *Arrest of Nasrin Sotoudeh and enforced disappearance of Ahmadreza Haeri* (3 April 2026), available at: <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/arrest-nasrin-sotoudeh-and-enforced-disappearance-ahmadreza-haeri>; PEN America, *PEN America Condemns Shocking Arrest of Iranian Human Rights Lawyer and Writer Nasrin Sotoudeh* (2 April 2026), available at: <https://pen.org/press-release/shocking-arrest-nasrin-sotoudeh/>; CCBE, *Letter to the President of Iran re: arrest of lawyer and 2019 CCBE human rights laureate Nasrin Sotoudeh* (3 April 2026), available at: https://www.ccbe.eu/fileadmin/speciality_distribution/public/documents/HUMAN_RIGHTS_LETTERS/Iran_-_Iran/2026/EN_HRL_20260403_Iran_Arrest-of-lawyer-and-2019-CCBE-human-rights-laureate-Nasrin-Sotoudeh.pdf.

³ See Front Line Defenders, *Arrest of Nasrin Sotoudeh and enforced disappearance of Ahmadreza Haeri*, cited above; FIDH/LDDHI, *Iran: Human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh arbitrarily arrested amid intensified crackdown*, cited above; Iran Human Rights, *Human Rights Lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh Arrested*, cited above. According to these sources, Reza Khandan was arrested on 13 December 2024, is detained in Evin Prison, and has been targeted in connection with peaceful advocacy, including opposition to compulsory hijab laws and the death penalty.

⁴ On the October 2023 arrest and the prior pattern of persecution, see the Coalition's earlier statement, *Nasrin Sotoudeh Coalition Call to Action* (31 October 2023), available at: https://www.aeud.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Final-Statement-with-Logos_final-version-1.pdf; PEN America, *Nasrin Sotoudeh* (case page), available at: <https://pen.org/individual-case/nasrin-sotoudeh/>; FIDH/LDDHI, *Iran: Human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh arbitrarily arrested amid intensified crackdown*, cited above; Front Line Defenders, *Arrest of Nasrin Sotoudeh and enforced disappearance of Ahmadreza Haeri*, cited above.

professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference, and make clear that lawyers must not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes by reason of discharging their functions.⁵

The Coalition therefore calls, in the strongest possible terms, for the following measures:

- 1) the immediate disclosure of Nasrin Sotoudeh's whereabouts and legal status;
- 2) the immediate and unconditional access for Ms Sotoudeh to legal counsel of her own choosing, to her family, and to any medical care she may require;
- 3) the immediate and unconditional release of Nasrin Sotoudeh, and the dropping of any charges brought against her in connection with her lawful professional and human rights activities;
- 4) the immediate release of Reza Khandan and an end to reprisals against members of Ms Sotoudeh's family;
- 5) an end to all forms of harassment, intimidation and judicial persecution directed at lawyers and human rights defenders in Iran;
- 6) urgent public and diplomatic intervention by the relevant United Nations, Council of Europe and European Union institutions.

An attack on Nasrin Sotoudeh is not merely an attack on an individual lawyer of exceptional courage and integrity. It is an attack on the independence of the legal profession, on the right of every person to an effective defence, and on the very possibility of safeguarding rights through law. The continuing imprisonment of Reza Khandan reinforces the conclusion that the authorities are seeking to silence not only a renowned lawyer, but an entire family identified with peaceful resistance to repression. Such conduct demands a prompt, principled and public response.

We respectfully urge you to intervene as a matter of priority.

Amsterdam, 10 April 2026.

Yours faithfully,

Avocats Sans Frontières France

Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (Conseil des Barreaux Européens, CCBE)

⁵ See Universal Declaration of Human Rights, especially Articles 9, 10, 12, 19 and 20, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/human-rights/universal-declaration/translations/english>; OHCHR, *Declaration on Human Rights Defenders*, especially Articles 1, 2 and 12, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-human-rights-defenders/declaration-human-rights-defenders>; OHCHR, *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*, especially Principles 16, 17, 18 and 23, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/basic-principles-role-lawyers>; Council of Europe, *Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer*, CETS No. 226, adopted on 12 March 2025 and opened for signature on 13 May 2025, especially Articles 1 and 2, available at <https://rm.coe.int/prems-046225-gbr-2017-stce-226-and-explanatory-memorandum-9596-txt-web/4880283363>. Iran is also a State Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the concerns raised here engage, inter alia, Articles 9, 14, 17, 19, 21 and 22 thereof.

Défense Sans Frontières – Avocats Solidaires
Democratic Lawyers of Switzerland (DJS-JDS)
Deutscher Anwaltverein (German Bar Association)
European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDH)
European Criminal Bar Association
Institut des Droits de l’Homme des Avocats Européens
Institut des Droits de l’Homme du Barreau de Bordeaux
Institut des Droits Humains du Barreau de Bruxelles
International Association of People’s Lawyers
International Association of Russian Advocates
International Bar Association’s Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)
International Observatory of Lawyers at Risk (OIAD)
Lawyers for Lawyers
Lawyers For the Rule of Law
Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada
Magistrats Européens pour la Démocratie et les Libertés (MEDEL)
New York City Bar Association
Orde van Vlaamse Balies (OVB)
Ordine degli Avvocati di Venezia
Ordre des avocats de Genève (ODAGE)
Progressive Lawyers’ Association (ÇHD)
Rechtsanwaltskammer Berlin
Republikanischer Anwältinnen - und Anwälteverein e.V. (RAV)
The Defense Commission of the Barcelona Bar
The Foundation Day of the Endangered Lawyer
The Law Society of England and Wales
Unione delle Camere Penali Italiane
Unione Forense per la Tutela dei Diritti Umani