

Leader of the Islamic Republic
His Excellency Ayotallah Sayed Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader,
Shoahada Street, Qom
Islamic Republic of Iran

Brussels, 22 November 2012

Re: Solidarity with imprisoned human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh

Your excellency,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which, through the national Bars and Law Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area, represents more than 1 million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it has also observer representatives from a further eleven European countries' bars.

The CCBE places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The CCBE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world.

Recalling our previous letters dated 17 December 2010, 13 January 2011 and 12 December 2011, the CCBE writes to reiterate its strong criticism over the situation of Ms Nasrin Sotoudeh, one of Iran's most prominent human rights lawyers and winner of the 2012 European Parliament Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. Before her arrest on 4 September 2010, Ms Sotoudeh had represented human rights defenders and activists after Iran's disputed presidential elections of June 2009, as well as juveniles facing the death penalty, women and prisoners of conscience.

The CCBE has now been informed that Ms Sotoudeh initiated a hunger strike on 17 October 2012 protesting against the refusal of the Iranian authorities to allow her to have regular visits with her two children, a 13-year-old daughter and a 5-year-old son, in the past four months, in addition to restrictions on her right to make phone calls. Ms Sotoudeh has repeatedly been on hunger strike in the past, in reaction to the restrictions and mistreatment imposed on political prisoners by the Iranian authorities.

The CCBE is deeply worried for Nasrin Sotoudeh's physical and psychological integrity, especially given that she has been on hunger strike for more than four weeks.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention article 10(1) of the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) which states that:

All persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.

Furthermore, article 37 of the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners adopted by the First United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (1955), states that:

Prisoners shall be allowed under necessary supervision to communicate with their family and reputable friends at regular intervals, both by correspondence and by receiving visits.

Therefore, the CCBE calls upon the Iranian authorities to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of Nasrin Sotoudeh and indeed of all human rights defenders presently detained in your country, and ensure in all circumstances full respect for fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights instruments ratified by Iran.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Prunbauer-Glaser', with a long vertical stroke extending downwards from the end of the signature.

Marcella PRUNBAUER-GLASER

CCBE President