

Leader of the Islamic Republic,  
His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei,  
The Office of the Supreme Leader,  
Shoahada Street, Qom,  
Islamic Republic of Iran,  
Faxes: + 98 21 649 5880 / 21 774 2228

**Re: Concerns regarding the case of lawyer Ms. 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 one million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it has also observer representatives from a further eleven European countries' bars.

The CCBE, through its Human Rights Committee, 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.

We are writing to express our serious concerns over the situation facing Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh, a prominent human rights lawyer.

According to information received, on September 7, 2010, Ms. Sotoudeh went to Evin prison court, where she had been summoned by the Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office on charges of "propaganda against the State" and "collusion and gathering with the aim of acting against national security". After her questioning by a magistrate, Ms. Sotoudeh was arrested. Her lawyer was not permitted to be present during the questioning. To date, Ms. Sotoudeh is reportedly detained in Evin prison.

A few days before her arrest, she had reported to the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran how the authorities were using tax harassment against human rights lawyers in order to limit their working conditions. She gave the example of Ms. Shirin Ebadi who was subjected to the payment of a tax bill of hundreds of thousands of dollars on the money she had been awarded for her Nobel Peace Prize.

On August, 28, 2010, Ms. Sotoudeh's office and home were searched by members of the intelligence services and her assets were frozen.

It seems that Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh's arbitrary detention and the judicial harassment against her are merely aimed at sanctioning her human rights activities.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Article 16 states that:

*Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to*

*consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.*

Furthermore, the CCBE wishes to note the provisions of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted on December 9, 1998 by the United Nations General Assembly, in particular:

- article 1 which states that: *“Everyone has the right, individually or in association with others, to promote the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels”*,
- article 5(c) which states that *“everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, at the national and international levels, [...] to communicate with non-governmental or intergovernmental organizations”*,
- article 9 which notably states that *“everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, inter alia [...] to offer and provide professionally qualified legal assistance or other relevant advice and assistance in defending human rights and fundamental freedoms”*,
- article 12.2 which provides that *“the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration”*.

In view of the above, the CCBE expresses its deep concerns about Ms. Nasrin Soutoudeh's case and urges you to guarantee in all circumstances her physical and psychological integrity and to release her immediately and unconditionally. The CCBE also asks you to put an end to acts of harassment - including at the judicial level - against Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh and to ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights instruments ratified by Iran.

Yours sincerely,



JOSÉ-MARÍA DAVÓ-FERNÁNDEZ  
President