

Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader
Islamic Republic Street
End of Shahid Keshvar Doust Street
Tehran
Islamic Republic of Iran

Brussels, 11th of March 2013

Re: Concerns regarding the arrest and condemnation of lawyer, Mr Mohammad Seifzadeh

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, 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.

The CCBE writes to express its serious concerns over the arrest and detention of Mr Mohammad Seifzadeh, a lawyer representing several journalists, political activists and prisoners of conscience and co-founder of the Defenders of Human Rights Centre (DHRC), one of the most prominent human rights organisation in Iran.

According to the information we received on the 20th of February 2013, Mr. Seifzadeh was sentenced to six years of imprisonment by the Islamic Revolution Court on charges of "collusion and assembly against national security".

In October 2010, Mohammad Seifzadeh was already condemned to 9 years imprisonment and a 10 year ban from exercising the legal profession. The aforementioned decision was then overruled by a court of appeal which, on the 14th of June 2011, reduced his sentence to 2 years imprisonment.

The CCBE believes that the new sentencing of Mohammad Seifzadeh is as a result of his peaceful and legitimate activities as a human rights lawyer and his involvement in the establishment of the DHRC.

The conditions of detention of Mr Seifzadeh are particularly worrisome. The CCBE has been informed that, regardless of his worsening health conditions, he has no access to medical care.

The CCBE is alarmed by these facts, which indicate a repressive environment for human rights lawyers in Iran.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the following Articles of 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, Article 23 states that:

Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the rights to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organisations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organisation. In exercising these rights, lawyers shall always conduct themselves in accordance with the law and the recognised standards and ethics of the legal profession.

In view of the above, the CCBE respectfully urges you to take immediate and effective steps to release Mr Mohammad Seifzadeh, drop all charges brought against him and guarantee in all circumstances that lawyers in Iran are able to conduct their professional duties without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference, and that they do not suffer prosecution for any action taken while carrying out their professional duties.

Yours sincerely,



Evangelos TSOUROULIS
CCBE President