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Venice, 31/10/2023

Re: Urgent request for intervention in favour of Mrs Nasrin Sotoudeh

Dear all,

The undersigned organizations urge you to take concrete and urgent action in the case of Nasrin Sotoudeh, prominent and well-known lawyer and human rights defender¹.

On Sunday, 29 October, the media broke the news that she had been arrested while attending the funeral of Armita Garavand, the 16-year-old girl who died after 28 days in a coma following her arrest by the infamous Morality Police in the Tehran metro².

¹ **Nasrin Sotoudeh**, 60, mother of two, a distinguished Iranian human rights lawyer, was arrested for a second time on June 13, 2018 after she represented a woman facing imprisonment for peacefully protesting against Iran's compulsory hijab law by removing it in public. Sotoudeh was informed that she had been detained based on a **5 year prison** sentence that was issued against her *in absentia* in 2015 by a Revolutionary Court judge on the charge of "*espionage in hiding*".

On March 9, 2019, she received a copy of a court ruling issued after a one-day hearing held *in absentia* on December 30, 2018, by Branch 28 of the Islamic Revolution Court in Tehran. The Court found her guilty and sentenced her to **33 years in prison and 148 lashes** on the following seven charges: "*gathering and collusion against national security*" (Article 610 of the Islamic Penal Code), "*spreading propaganda against the system*" (Article 500), "*effective membership of the illegal and anti-security splinter groups Defenders of Human Rights Centre, LEGAM and National Council of Peace*" (Article 498); "*encouraging people to commit corruption and prostitution, and providing the means for it*" (Article 639), "*appearing without the sharia-sanctioned hijab at the premises of the magistrate's office*" (Article 638); "*disrupting public order and calm*" (Article 618) and "*spreading falsehoods with intent to disturb the public opinion*" (Article 698).

She is currently serving her sentence although she is on medical furlough since July 2021, and continues to advocate for people's basic human rights.

For her commitment to the defence of human rights she has been honoured internationally with many prestigious awards such as PEN America's 2011 Freedom to Write, the Sakharov Prize of the European Parliament in 2012, the Ludovic Trarieux International Human Rights Prize in 2018, the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) Human Rights Award in 2019 and the Right Livelihood Award in 2020.

² [Iran arrests lawyer at funeral of girl who died after metro incident](#), *The Guardian*, 30 October 2023, [Famed Iranian Rights Lawyer Reportedly Jailed and Beaten](#), *The New York Times*, 30 October 2023.

She was taken along with other arrested women to the Vozara detention centre, the same one in which Mahsa Amini died last year³.

She was scheduled to be heard in her case on Monday, 30 October, at Evin prison, but was not brought to court because she refused to wear a veil.

She was then taken to Qarchak prison, known for its poor conditions of detention, and is currently on a hunger strike in protest, refusing both essential medication for her health and visits⁴.

The Iranian authorities must immediately and unconditionally free Nasrin Sotoudeh, drop all charges against her and stop persecuting her for her efforts to protect, *inter alia*, women from discrimination and humiliation to which they are subjected in contravention of the principle of civilization enshrined in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ratified by Iran in 1948, according to which '*all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights*' where dignity comes even before rights.

Likewise, the international community, including the EU given its ongoing dialogue with Iran, must condemn all forms of violence, including executions, discrimination and persecution, recognizing the freedoms of thought, conscience, religion, expression, assembly and association, as well as the right to a fair trial, as foundations of civilized living.

We Colleagues, Magistrates, NGOs and civil society are united and resolute in denouncing these violations of fundamental rights and freedoms and support human rights defenders. We no longer need martyrs to mourn, but heroes whose examples are to be followed.

We request a concrete statement from you, a decisive commitment to end the judicial harassment of Nasrin Sotoudeh, recalling the tenets of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers on the therein enshrined States' responsibility⁵.

*If we do not defend human rights defenders, who will defend human rights?*⁶

We thank you for your attention and we look forward to your urgent and effective intervention.

Best regards,



Asociacion Libre de Abogadas y Abogados – Free Association of Lawyers

³ [Prominent Lawyer and Activists Beaten, Detained at Funeral of Teenager Armita Geravand](#), Center for Human Rights in Iran, 30 October 2023.

⁴ Confirmed by her husband Reza Khandan on his Facebook page, 30 October 2023. [Jailed Iranian Activist Sotoudeh on Hunger and Medicine Strike](#), Iranwire, 31 October 2023.

⁵ Resolution n. 53/144 adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1998, Article 2 "1. Each State has a prime responsibility and duty to protect, promote and implement all human rights and fundamental freedoms, *inter alia*, by adopting such steps as may be necessary to create all conditions necessary in the social, economic, political and other fields, as well as the legal guarantees required to ensure that all persons under its jurisdiction, individually and in association with others, are able to enjoy all those rights and freedoms in practice. 2. Each State shall adopt such legislative, administrative and other steps as may be necessary to ensure that the rights and freedoms referred to in the present Declaration are effectively guaranteed."

⁶ Quote from Rosemary Nelson, lawyer and human rights defender killed by a car bomb in Lurgan, Northern Ireland, in 1999.



Avocats Européens Démocrates / European Democratic Lawyers



Avocats Sans Frontières / Lawyers Without Borders



La où la défense n'a plus la parole
Avocats Sans Frontières / France



Conseil National des Barreaux les Avocats – National Bar Council of France / France



Consiglio Nazionale Forense / Italian National Bar Council



Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) / Europe



Défense Sans Frontière-Avocats Solidaires / France



Deutscher **Anwalt** Verein

Deutscher Anwalt Verein – The German Bar Association / Germany



European Criminal Bar Association



European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights



European Young Bar Association



Fédération des Barreaux d'Europe



Foundation Day of the Endangered Lawyer



Giuristi Democratici - Democratic Jurists / Italy



International Association of Lawyers, Institute for the Rule of Law



International Association of People's Lawyers (IAPL), Monitoring Committee on Attacks on Lawyers



Institut des Droits de l'Homme des Avocats Européens (IDHAE)



Institut des Droits de l'Homme, Barreau de Bruxelles / Belgium



Lawyers For Lawyers / The Netherlands



Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada



Legal Team Italia / Italy



Magistrats Européens pour la Démocratie et les Libertés



Equality & Justice

National Association of Democratic Lawyers (NADEL) / South Africa



New York City Bar / The United States of America



Observatoire International des Avocats en Danger / International Observatory for Lawyers (OIAD)



Ordine degli Avvocati di Venezia / Italy



Ordre des Avocats Geneve - Geneva Bar Association / the Switzerland



Ordre des Barreaux Francophones et Germanophone (AVOCATS.BE) - Association of French- and German-speaking Bar Associations / Belgium



Özgürlük İçin Hukukçular Derneği – Association of Lawyers for Freedom / Turkey



Progressive Lawyers' Association / Turkey



Rechtsanwältinnen und Rechtsanwälte für Demokratie und Menschenrechte (RAV) / Germany



Rechtsanwaltskammer Berlin – Berlin Bar Association /Germany



Syndicat des Avocats de France - Trade Union of Lawyers / France



The Law Society of England and Wales



Union of the Italian Criminal Chambers – Endangered Lawyers Observatory and Europe Observatory/
Italy



Vereniging Sociale Advocatuur Nederland - Netherlands Association of Social Advocates