

Head of the Judiciary
Ebrahim Raisi
C/o Permanent Mission of Iran to the UN
Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 28
1209 Geneva
Switzerland

Dear Mr Raisi,

Nasrin Sotoudeh, a prominent human rights lawyer and women's rights defender who has been arbitrarily detained in Tehran's Evin prison since her arrest on 13 June 2018, faces a total of up to 34 years in prison and 148 lashes in relation to two ongoing court cases. I appeal to you to release her as she is a prisoner of conscience.

Nasrin Sotoudeh is awaiting a court verdict following a grossly unfair trial that took place, in her and her lawyer's absence, on 30 December 2018 before Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran. She has been prosecuted on seven charges, some of which are related to her opposition to forced hijab laws, including "inciting corruption and prostitution" and "openly committing a sinful act... by appearing in public without a hijab". Some of her legitimate activities that the authorities have cited as "evidence" against her include: opposing forced hijab; removing her headscarf during prison visits; defending women who peacefully protested against forced hijab; giving media interviews about the violent arrest and detention of women protesting against forced hijab; and placing flowers at the scene where a woman protester was violently arrested. Other charges brought against her include "forming a group with the purpose of disrupting national security" and are based, in part, on her work with three human rights groups including the Campaign for Step by Step Abolition of the Death Penalty.

Following her arrest, the authorities informed Nasrin Sotoudeh for the first time that, in September 2016, Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran had convicted her, in her absence, in a separate case and sentenced her to five years in prison. She was not present during that trial because, on the day of the hearing, the court authorities said she was not wearing appropriate Islamic dress and refused her entry. She had initially been charged with "spreading propaganda against the system" and "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security". However, the judge, in breach of procedure, convicted her on another charge, that of "assisting in hiding spies with the intent to harm national security", citing legitimate activities such as her meetings with foreign diplomats to convict her. This case is now before an appeal court.

I urge you to release Nasrin Sotoudeh immediately and unconditionally as she is a prisoner of conscience, jailed solely for her peaceful human rights work. Pending her release, please ensure

that she has regular contact with her family and a lawyer of her choosing. I urge you to stop criminalizing the work of women's rights defenders, including those who peacefully protest against forced hijab, and abolish forced hijab laws.

Yours sincerely,