



Nowruz Action

کارزار نوروز

The Persian holiday Nowruz نوروز (“new day”) is an ancient holiday celebrated on the first day of spring to welcome in the new year. On this Nowruz we want to remember several courageous prisoners of conscience in Iran with Nowruz greetings. We ask you to send cards with simple Nowruz greetings such as “Nowruz mobarak” نوروز مبارک

You can say “thinking of you at Nowruz time” or “hoping you are well.” You may send a greeting in either English or Farsi (Persian) but please do not mention Amnesty International or specifics of the recipient’s case. Please also refrain from mentioning the political situation, human rights or U.S.-Iran relations. We suggest sending cards with pictures of landscapes, spring flowers or the like, in keeping with the spirit of the holiday and the message of hope and renewal. Please do not choose cards that have pictures of people, and please do not use cards that depict bottles of wine or other alcoholic beverages.

Traditional Nowruz celebrations include the preparation of a Haft Sin table which literally means the seven s’s. Seven items beginning with the Persian letter sin (equivalent to the English s) and which represent spring time are set out. To honor this tradition, this year Amnesty International has selected seven cases, all of them prisoners of conscience who have been identified by Amnesty International as “individuals at risk” and are therefore targeted for intensified campaigning. Several of them have been sentenced to long prison terms for their peaceful activism and several are in poor health.

Please see next pages.

Seven Baha'is



Seven leaders of Iran's Baha'i community were sentenced to twenty years in prison by a Revolutionary Court in Tehran on 7 August 2010. Their sentence was reduced to ten years in September. Although they have done nothing more than peacefully practice their religion, they were convicted on serious, but baseless, charges including "espionage for Israel," "insulting religious sanctities" and "propaganda against the system." They had also been charged with "ifsad fil arz" or "corruption on earth." All seven had been held in Section 209 of Evin Prison in Tehran, which is run by the Ministry of Intelligence, but they were moved to Raja'i Shahr (Gohardasht) Prison in Karaj—used to house violent criminals and where sanitary conditions are particularly poor. They have only been allowed intermittent access to their lawyers while they have been in custody.

The seven include two women, Fariba Kamalabadi and Mahvash Sabet, and five men: Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, Saeid Rezaei, Behrouz Tavakkoli and Vahid Tizfahm. All are leading members of a group responsible for the Baha'i community's religious and administrative affairs. Mahvash Sabet who acted as the group's secretary, was arrested on 5 March 2008. The others were arrested on 14 May 2008. From their arrest until August 2010, the seven were held in Section 209 of Evin Prison in Tehran, which is run by the Ministry of Intelligence. They were allowed very limited access to their lawyers while they have been in custody.

You can send Nowruz greetings to the seven Baha'is to:

Zendane Rajae Shahr
Bulvare Moazen
Karaj Iran

زندان رجاہی شہر) - پ و لوار موذن - رجاہی شہر - کرج - ایران

Majid Tavakkoli



Student leader Majid Tavakkoli, a member of the Islamic Students Association, is serving a prison sentence of eight and a half years, imposed after an unfair trial in a Revolutionary Court. He started a hunger strike to protest the unjust sentence and his detention in solitary confinement around May 22, 2010. His brother and others reported that he has lost the ability to speak, and is suffering from a respiratory condition and internal bleeding. Amnesty International is concerned that he may not be receiving the medical attention he needs.

Majid Tavakkoli was arrested on 7 December 2009 after he gave a speech at a demonstration at Amir Kabir University of Technology in Tehran, marking Student Day. He was reportedly beaten during his arrest. The day after his arrest, in an apparent attempt to humiliate him, the Fars News Agency, linked to the Iranian government, published a photo of Majid Tavakkoli wearing women's clothing, and claimed he had been wearing the clothes at the time of his arrest. However, in a massive show of solidarity, about 450 men posted photos of themselves wearing women's clothing—some holding signs saying “We are Majid” on Facebook and other sites on the internet.

His trial was held in Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran in January 2010. His lawyer was not permitted to attend. He was convicted of several offenses and reportedly received a five year sentence for “participating in an illegal gathering,” one year for “propaganda against the system,” two more years for “insulting the Supreme Leader” and six months for “insulting the president.” He was also given a five-year ban on any involvement in political activities and on leaving the country. He is serving his sentence in Evin Prison in Tehran.

You can send Nowruz greetings for Majid Tavakkoli to his family:

Majid Tavakkoli
Faze 3, Entehaye Khiabane Yaas
Shahrak Baharestan (Miyanrood)
Shiraz 7179743355
Islamic Republic of Iran

Nasrin Sotoudeh



Prominent human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh has been sentenced to eleven years in prison, and banned from practicing law and traveling for twenty years. The judge sentenced her to five years in prison on a charge of “acting against national security,” another five years for “not wearing hejab (Islamic dress for women) during a videotaped message,” and one year for “propaganda against the regime.” Nasrin Sotoudeh has been detained since her arrest on 4 September and has spent most of her time in solitary confinement with limited access to her family. She is reportedly very weak from undertaking three hunger strikes to protest the conditions of her confinement.

Ms Sotoudeh, a mother of two children, has defended Iranian Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi and other human rights activists, as well as juvenile offenders sentenced to death. Her conviction is based solely on her peaceful work representing her clients. The persecution of Nasrin Sotoudeh is just one example of the Iranian government’s pernicious campaign against human rights attorneys who struggle to carry out their work in a deeply flawed legal system. Several prominent human rights lawyers such as Shirin Ebadi, Shadi Sadr and Mohammad Mostafaei have been hounded into exile, while others such as Mohammad Seifzadeh have been sentenced to long prison terms; still others such as Abdolfattah Soltani await trial.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay expressed concern about her case on 23 November 2010, stating, “I am very concerned that Nasrin Sotoudeh’s case is part of a much broader crackdown, and that the situation of human rights defenders in Iran is growing more and more difficult.” She urged the Iranian authorities to review her case urgently and expedite her release. The UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers provide that lawyers must be allowed to carry out their work “without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference.” In addition, it affirms the right of lawyers to freedom of expression, also provided for in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which includes “the right to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights.”

You can send Nowruz greetings for Nasrin Sotoudeh to her husband:

Reza Khandan
Koocheh Baharan 2
Pelak 8-Vahed 4
Tehran
Islamic Republic of Iran

Emadeddin Baghi



Prominent human rights defender Emadeddin Baghi has been sentenced to a total of seven years in prison, including six years for recording an interview with the late reformist cleric Grand Ayatollah Montazeri. He was sent to prison on 5 December 2010 and is reportedly being held without access to his family. He suffers from serious heart, respiratory and kidney ailments which have been brought on or exacerbated by poor prison conditions and medical neglect suffered during previous imprisonments.

Emadeddin Baghi, the head of the banned Association for the Defense of Prisoners' Rights (ADPR), was told on 22 September 2010 that he had been convicted for "propaganda against the system" and "gathering and colluding with the aim of harming national security." The charges stemmed from his 2008 TV interview with Grand Ayatollah Montazeri, broadcast by BBC Persian in December 2009, shortly after the cleric's death. He had previously been sentenced to one year in prison and a five-year ban on any media or NGO work in connection with his establishment of the ADPR in 2003. In November 2009, Iranian authorities refused to allow him to travel to Geneva to accept the prestigious Martin Ennals Award for human rights defenders.

Emadeddin Baghi had served nearly six months in detention following his arrest on 28 December 2009, shortly after the Shi'a religious observance of Ashoura which was marked by massive anti-government protests. While in detention, he had been interrogated about his views on the death penalty and his connections to human rights organizations, including Amnesty International.

Emadeddin Baghi suffers from serious heart and kidney ailments which have been brought on or exacerbated by poor prison conditions and medical neglect suffered during previous imprisonments. Prior to his arrest in December 2009, he had served a total of four and a half years in prison, including a one-year period ending in October 2008, during which he suffered three seizures.

You can send Nowruz greetings to Emadeddin Baghi to his wife Fatemeh Kamali Ahmad Sarahi at:

Flat #1, 4th floor,
1 Ghaffari Alley
Ekhtiarieh Square – Pasdaran Street
Tehran
Islamic Republic of Iran

Hengameh Shahidi



Hengameh Shahidi, a journalist and women's rights activist, began serving a six-year prison sentence in Evin Prison in Tehran on 25 February 2010 after an appeal court upheld her conviction and sentence for "gathering and colluding with intent to harm state security" and "propaganda against the system." Amnesty International considers her to be a prisoner of conscience, held solely for her peaceful political and journalistic activities.

Hengameh Shahidi was an advisor on women's issues to presidential candidate Mehdi Karroubi who ran in the disputed 12 June 2009 elections. She is a member of his E'temad-e Melli (National Trust) Party. The party's newspaper, E'temad was shut down by authorities on 1 March 2010. She acted as an advisor to current President Ahmadinejad's predecessor, President Khatami, on youth affairs during his term in office (1997-2005), and served on Tehran's city council.

Hengameh Shahidi had been previously detained for four months from the end of June to 1 November 2009 and has reported that she was tortured in custody and threatened with execution. For the first 50 days of her detention, she was held in solitary confinement in a tiny cell. At her trial on 4 November 2009, she was accused of taking part in demonstrations that protested the contested elections, giving an interview to the media, writing articles on her blog, singing statements addressed to the United Nations about human rights in Iran, and collecting signatures for the Campaign for Equality which seeks to change discriminatory laws affecting women.

You can send Nowruz greetings to Hengameh Shahidi to:

Hengameh Shahidi
Evin Prison
Chamran Highway
Shahid Katchuyi Street
Darakeh, Tehran,
Islamic Republic of Iran

Kamiar and Arash Alaei



Brothers Arash Alaei and Kamiar Alaei, doctors specializing in the prevention and treatment of HIV and AIDS, were tried on 31 December 2008 for plotting to overthrow the Iranian government and other charges in proceedings that did not meet international standards for fair trial. On 20 January 2009, the brothers were informed that Kamiar Alaei had been sentenced to six years in prison while Arash Alaei had been sentenced to three years.

Arash and Kamiar Alaei had been arrested in June 2008 and held without charge for six months. The brothers were given a one-day trial before Tehran's Revolutionary Court, along with two other individuals. They were accused of involvement in an attempt to overthrow the government. The prosecutor withheld some of the charges they faced, giving the brothers no opportunity to refute the charges. The prosecutor also submitted secret evidence the brothers' lawyer did not have the opportunity to examine or refute. The two doctors are known to have been charged under article 508 of Iran's Islamic Penal Code with "cooperating" with an "enemy government," which carries a penalty of between one and ten years' imprisonment.

Amnesty International is concerned the charges against Arash and Kamiar Alaei, and the allegations of their involvement in a plot to overthrow the government, are based solely on vaguely-worded national security laws. Amnesty International believes that the brothers are prisoners of conscience, targeted solely for their internationally recognized medical research and advocacy efforts and for their peaceful collaboration with non-governmental organizations in other countries.

You can send Nowruz greetings to Kamiar and Arash Alaei to:

Velenjak St., 16
Yasaman 2 Blvd
Floor 5, Apartment 3
Alaei
Tehran
Islamic Republic of Iran

Mansour Ossanlu



Mansour Ossanlu is the leader of the Union of Workers of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company (Syndica-ye Sherkat-e Vahed). He is currently serving a five-year prison sentence for “acts against national security.” The charges stem from his peaceful work to obtain better conditions for workers in Iran and to end discriminatory laws and practices that curtail workers’ rights in Iran. He had been arrested and detained several times and severely beaten in custody.

He had originally been held in Tehran’s Evin Prison but in August 2008 he was transferred to Raja’i-Shahr prison in the city of Karaj which houses criminals convicted of violent crimes. Raja’i-Shahr prison is far from his wife and family who have not been able to visit him very often.

He has suffered from serious medical problems, including retinal damage resulting from beatings he received during a previous detention. Although he was permitted to undergo emergency eye surgery in October 2007, his health condition is still a concern. He has not been allowed to receive the medical care he needs. Amnesty International considers him a prisoner of conscience who is being detained on vaguely worded charges in order to halt his efforts to build strong trade unions capable of defending the human rights of workers.

You can send a greeting for Mansour Ossanlu to his wife Parvaneh at:

Golbarg-e Gharbi
(Janbazan-e Gharbi)
Taqate’ Maseyl-e Bakhtar
Sar-e Koucheh Shahid Ali Akbar Amiri
Plak 343, Tabaqe avval
Khaneye Ossanlu
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Or:
Mansour Ossanlu
First floor, Number 343
Shahid Ali Akbar Amiri Alley
Western Water Barrier Crossroads (or: Maseyl-e Bakhtar Crossroads)
(Janbazan West)
Golbarg West, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

In Persian:

گلیبرگ غربی

(جانبازان غربی)

تقاطع مسیل باختر

شهید علی اکبر امیری سر کوچه

پلاک 343

طبقه اول