



## Nowruz Action

### کارزار نوروز

The Iranian holiday Nowruz نوروز (“new day”) is an ancient holiday celebrated on the first day of spring in the northern hemisphere to welcome in the new year. On this Nowruz we want to remember several courageous prisoners of conscience and political prisoners 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, prisoners of conscience and political prisoners, 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.

This year we are requesting that people take pictures of their Nowruz cards, or of themselves holding up their Nowruz cards before putting them in the mail and sending the pictures to us (aiis@uchicago.edu or ewalsh@aiusa.org). Please post them on your Facebook pages as well as on your Twitter accounts, tagging Amnesty International’s Iran account (@AmnestyIran) so that we can retweet you.

Our previous Nowruz actions have been very successful! Three subjects of the 2016 Nowruz action---Omid Kokabee, Bahareh Hedayat and Atena Farghadani, were released thanks to the persevering efforts of many committed activists. Student leader Majid Tavakkoli, who had been featured in several previous Nowruz actions, was released from prison in 2015. Other subjects of previous Nowruz actions who have been released from prison include Mansour Ossanlu, Hengameh Shahidi, Emadeddin Baghi, Nasrin Sotoudeh and brothers Kamiar and Arash Alaei. Kamiar and Arash related how they were given a brief medical furlough from prison and went back to their parents’ house to find hundreds of Nowruz cards sent to them by Amnesty activists and how much that cheered them up and gave them the strength to go on. Omid Kokabee also received hundreds of Nowruz greetings and he and his family thanked Amnesty members profusely. This action really matters! Please see next pages.

## Seven Leaders of Iran's Baha'i Community



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. 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 "spreading 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 were later moved to Raja'i Shahr (Gohardasht) Prison in Karaj where conditions are particularly poor. The two females among the seven are now back in Evin Prison in Tehran.

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 and were allowed very limited access to their lawyers while they have been in custody. The leaders are now serving only 10 years of their 20-year prison sentences as a new provision in the 2013 Islamic Penal Code allows anyone convicted of multiple charges to serve only the longest sentence for any single charge.

The Baha'i community in Iran (estimated to be about 300,000) has been subjected to increasingly harsh persecution in recent years and over 100 Baha'is are currently in detention in Iran, while many others have been released on bail and are awaiting trial or have charges pending against them. The Baha'i faith is not recognized as a religion in Iran's Constitution, and Baha'is are excluded from institutions of higher education in Iran. Educators and staff with the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education, established to provide an alternative education to Baha'i young people, have been arrested and imprisoned simply for their peaceful educational activities.

The former U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran, Ahmed Shaheed, had condemned the persecution of the Baha'i community by the Iranian authorities, including in his report issued in March 2016.

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

Baha'i International Community  
15 route des Morillons  
1218 Grand Saconnex  
Switzerland

## Narges Mohammadi



Narges Mohammadi is a distinguished and passionate defender of human rights. She was vice-president of the Center for Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) which reported on violations of human rights in Iran provided *pro-bono* legal representation to political prisoners and support to their families before it was forcibly closed by the Iranian authorities in December 2008. The Center was co-founded with prominent human rights attorneys, including Iran's Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi. Narges Mohammadi also founded the organization Step by Step to Stop Death Penalty, a group campaigning against the death penalty in Iran.

Narges Mohammadi has paid more than most for her human rights activism. She has suffered years of harassment and intimidation from the Iranian authorities and has been in and out of prison for over a decade. She is currently serving a total of 22 years in prison. She was convicted of several unsubstantiated national security charges including “membership of an illegal organization whose aim is to harm national security” for founding Step by Step to Stop Death Penalty; “spreading propaganda against the system;” and “assembly and collusion against national security.” The “evidence” used against her included her media interviews; participating in gatherings outside prisons before executions to support the families of death row prisoners; her connections with other human rights defenders, such as Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Shirin Ebadi; and her meeting with Catherine Ashton, the former European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on International Women's Day and other women human rights defenders on 8 March 2014.

Narges Mohammadi has not been able to communicate regularly with her ten-year-old twins—a girl, Kiana and a boy, Ali; after her arrest they joined their father Taghi Rahmani in Paris, where he lives as a refugee. She suffers from a number of serious health problems which have been exacerbated because of her treatment by authorities, and for which she has not been allowed adequate treatment. She has undergone hunger strikes to protest her treatment.

She is a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for her peaceful exercise of her rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. In October 2016 several members of Iran's parliament sent a letter to the Head of the Judiciary Sadegh Larijani, calling for her release.

You can send Nowruz greetings for Narges Mohammadi to her husband and children:

Mr Taghi Rahmani  
c/o Iran Team, Middle East and North Africa Programme  
Amnesty International/ International Secretariat  
1 Easton Street  
London WC1X 0DW  
United Kingdom

## **Abdolfattah Soltani**



Abdolfattah Soltani, a prominent human rights lawyer, and together with Iran's Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi, a founder of the Center for Human Rights Defenders (CHRD), is serving a 13-year prison sentence in Evin Prison. The Iranian government forcibly shut down the CHRD in December 2008.

Abdolfattah Soltani was arrested on 10 September, 2011. He had been previously detained on other occasions for his devoted service to his clients, including well-known prisoners of conscience, as well as his tenacious advocacy on behalf of human rights in Iran. On at least two occasions since his detention, he has said he had been pressured to make a televised "confession," including that the CHRD had received funding from foreign sources to encourage a "soft revolution" in Iran, which Abdolfattah Soltani denies. In early March 2012 he was informed that he had been sentenced to 18 years in prison for "spreading propaganda against the system," "forming an illegal opposition group [the CHRD]" and "gathering and colluding with intent to harm national security." His sentence was eventually reduced to 13 years. He suffers from a number of severe health problems, for which he has not received adequate treatment.

He had been the lawyer for the seven leaders of Iran's persecuted Baha'i community who are currently in prison, as well as for a number of individuals who had been charged in connection with their peaceful involvement with the Baha'i Institute of Higher Education, founded to provide educational opportunities for Baha'i students who are systematically excluded from Iran's universities; several of them were sentenced to prison after Abdolfattah Soltani's arrest.

In October 2012 the International Bar Association awarded its Human Rights Award to Abdolfattah Soltani. On 6 February 2013 the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention concluded that the detention of Abdolfattah Soltani is arbitrary, and called on the Iranian government to release him immediately.

Abdolfattah Soltani's wife Massoumeh Dehgan has also been targeted: Branch 15 of the Islamic Revolution Court sentenced her to one year of imprisonment, suspended for five years, and banned her from travelling abroad for five years, on charges of "propaganda against the system."

You can send Nowruz greetings to Abdolfattah Soltani at:

c/o Iran Team, Middle East and North Africa Programme  
Amnesty International/ International Secretariat  
1 Easton Street  
London WC1X 0DW  
United Kingdom

## Zeynab Jalalian



Iranian Kurdish activist Zeynab Jalalian, aged 34, who is serving a life sentence imposed after a grossly unfair trial, is at risk of losing her eyesight in prison. The authorities have continued to deny her the specialized medical treatment she needs for a worsening eye condition which her family believes was caused by injuries she suffered under torture in detention.

Zeynab Jalalian was working to empower Iran's ethnic minority Kurds, particularly women when she was arrested in 2008. She was sentenced to death in early 2009 by Branch One of the Revolutionary Court in Kermanshah Province. After a trial lasting only a few minutes she was convicted of "enmity against God" (*moharebeh*)— a charge levelled against those accused of taking up arms against the state - in connection with her supposed links to the armed wing of a Kurdish opposition group. Her conviction and sentence were based on "confessions" she said were extracted after months of torture. She was also denied access to a lawyer. The death sentence was commuted to life in prison in late 2011.

Before her trial, she was held in solitary confinement for eight months. During this time she was flogged on the soles of her feet and her head was repeatedly rammed against a wall, fracturing her skull and causing bleeding in her brain. She suffers from a severe eye condition and urgently needs specialist surgery. However the authorities won't permit it and have also refused her repeated requests for medical leave. Some of her requests have been rejected outright while others have been accepted on condition that she makes videotaped "confessions." On one occasion, she says prison authorities told her that she had to have a virginity test before they would allow her to receive medical treatment. Withholding medical treatment resulting in severe pain or suffering in order to force a "confession" amounts to torture under international law.

In April 2016 the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention urged the Iranian authorities to release Zeynab Jalalian immediately and accord her an enforceable right to compensation

Nowruz greetings to Zeynab Jalalian can be sent:

c/o Darioush Bakhshi  
Head of Khoy Prison  
Khoy Prison  
Salmas Road (across Rah va Tarabari)  
Khoy County  
West Azerbaijan Province  
Iran

## Arash Sadeghi and Golrokh Iraee



Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee and her husband Arash Sadeghi are both prisoners of conscience. They were arrested together in September 2014 and were convicted and sentenced after an unfair trial that consisted only of two brief sessions in 2015. They had no legal representation at the trial.

Golrokh Iraee was sentenced to six years in prison on charges including “insulting Islamic sanctities” for writing a fictional story about the horrific practice of execution by stoning. This story had not been published but was found when authorities searched her personal computer. She started serving her sentence in October 2016; she was released temporarily, but was re-arrested and sent back to prison on 22 January 2017.

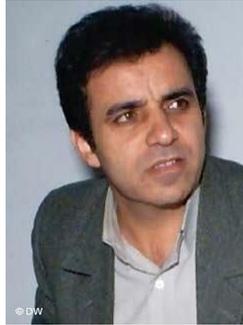
Arash Sadeghi has been serving a 15-year sentence in Evin prison for his peaceful human rights activities since June 2016. The charges against him included “gathering and colluding against national security,” “spreading propaganda against the system,” and “insulting the founder of the Islamic Republic.” He conducted a 71-day hunger strike from October 2016 to January 2017 to protest the imprisonment of his wife. During that time he suffered from multiple health problems but he was not provided with needed medical attention. He continues to suffer from kidney damage, inflamed and severely infected lungs, severe drops in blood pressure, irregular heartbeat, shortness of breath, nausea and vomiting blood, for which he has not been given proper care.

Arash Sadeghi had been studying philosophy at Allameh Tabatabai University until he was banned from continuing his education because of his political activism; he had been arrested a number of times for participating in demonstrations protesting the outcome of the 2009 presidential election. He has been subjected to severe torture during his detentions. He was hung from the ceiling by one leg and was beaten so savagely that his shoulder was dislocated and his teeth were broken. During another beating, his eardrum was torn. During yet another beating, he was blindfolded and kicked and punched in the face, causing bleeding and damage to his eyes and consequent vision problems. To compound his misery, when security forces sought his arrest in November 2010, they broke a window and entered in his home looking for him. He was not there at the time, but his mother suffered a heart attack during the break-in and died shortly later.

Nowruz greetings to Golrokh and Arash can be sent:

Iran Team, Middle East and North Africa Programme  
Amnesty International/ International Secretariat  
1 Easton Street  
London WC1X 0DW  
United Kingdom

## Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand



Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand, an Iranian Kurdish journalist and founder and chair of the Human Rights Organization of Kurdistan (HROK), has been serving a ten-year sentence in Evin prison since 2007. In May 2008 following an unfair trial in Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran, he was sentenced to prison for his peaceful human rights advocacy. He has been suffering from poor health—including heart and kidney problems—but he has not received adequate medical attention. He has undertaken hunger strikes to protest his treatment.

Until 2004, Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand was the editor of a weekly newspaper, Payam-e Mardom-e Kordestan, which carried articles promoting the cultural and political rights of Iran's Kurdish minority. The publication was issued a three-year ban by Iran's judiciary on June 27, 2004 for "disseminating separatist ideas and publishing false reports." Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand has also published three books and was awarded the Hellman/Hammett Grant from Human Rights Watch in January 2009. The grants are awarded to "writers punished by their governments for expressing opposition views, criticizing government officials or actions, or writing about topics that the government does not want reported."

His wife said that though her husband made regular requests for prison leave – to which he is entitled under Iranian law – each request is either summarily rejected by the Prosecutor's office or ignored. In April 2014 Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand was one of more than two dozen prisoners reported to have been injured by prison authorities who entered Section 350 of Evin Prison to conduct a search. When his wife visited him a few days later he was severely bruised, had two broken toes, three broken ribs, internal bleeding, and his head had been shaved.

In 2016 authorities charged him with "spreading propaganda against the system" from inside prison, perhaps because he had written a letter advocating for peace between Kurdish groups and the Turkish government and had issued a statement expressing concern about atrocities carried out by the Islamic State against Kurdish people in Syria. In May 2016, he was put on trial before a Revolutionary Court in Tehran in relation to these accusations. The session apparently lasted no longer than 30 minutes and he was not represented by a lawyer.

You can send Nowruz greetings for Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand to his family at:

Zeke Johnson, Individuals at Risk Program  
Amnesty International USA  
5 Penn Plaza, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10001

## Atena Daemi



Iranian human rights defender and anti-death penalty campaigner Atena Daemi was violently arrested on 26 November 2016 and taken to Evin Prison to begin serving a seven-year prison sentence for peacefully defending human rights, including through: writing posts on Facebook criticizing the authorities' execution record; painting anti-death penalty slogans on walls; distributing anti-death penalty leaflets; participating in a peaceful protest against the 2014 execution of a young Iranian woman named Reyhaneh Jabbari; visiting the gravesite of those killed during the protests following the 2009 presidential election; and sending information about abuses against political prisoners to human rights groups based outside Iran.

In the court verdict issued against her in April 2015, these peaceful activities were cited by Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran as evidence of “gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security,” “spreading propaganda against the system” and “insulting the Supreme Leader.” She is a prisoner of conscience.

Atena Daemi was first arrested in October 2014. She was held in Section 2A of Evin Prison – which is run by the Revolutionary Guards – for 86 days, including 51 days in solitary confinement. During this period, she was denied access to a lawyer even though she was repeatedly interrogated. Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran sentenced her to 14 years in prison after a grossly unfair trial in March 2015 that lasted no more than 15 minutes. In September 2016, Branch 36 of the Court of Appeal reduced the sentence to seven years. On the way to prison following her November 2016 arrest, Revolutionary Guard officials blindfolded her and repeatedly threatened her, saying that they would open new cases against her and had “cooked up a plan so that she gets the thought of ever getting released from prison out of her mind.”

Nowruz greetings for Atena Daemi can be sent to:

Iran Team, Middle East and North Africa Programme  
Amnesty International  
International Secretariat  
1 Easton Street  
London WC1X 0DW  
United Kingdom