



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 prisoners held for politically motivated reasons 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 or gambling.

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 prisoners held for politically motivated reasons, 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.

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 afandino@aiusa.org). Please post them on your Facebook pages as well as on your Twitter and Instagram accounts, tagging Amnesty International’s Iran account (@AmnestyIran and <https://www.instagram.com/amnestyiran/?hl=en>) so that we can retweet and share your messages.

Our previous Nowruz actions have been very successful! Two of the 2018 subjects—Abdolfattah Soltani and Reza Shahabi—were released from prison. All of the seven Yaran, leaders of Iran’s Baha’i community and featured in many Nowruz actions, have been released. Other subjects of previous Nowruz actions who have been released from prison thanks to the persevering efforts of many committed activists include Omid Kokabee, Bahareh Hedayat and Atena Farghadani, Majid Tavakkoli, Mansour Ossanlu, Emadeddin Baghi, Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand, 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.

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 campaign Step by Step to Stop Death Penalty, a group advocating for abolition of the death penalty in Iran.

Narges Mohammadi has been imprisoned since her arrest in May 2015. In 2011 she had been sentenced to six years in prison and was sentenced to a total of 16 years in prison in a separate case in May 2016 after being convicted following an unfair trial in a Revolutionary Court of “forming a group composed of more than two people with the purpose of disrupting national security,” “gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security,” and “spreading propaganda against the system.” Under Iran's sentencing guidelines she is required to serve ten years. Her convictions are due solely to her peaceful activism with the CHRD and the Campaign for Step by Step Abolition of the Death Penalty. Some of the “evidence” used against her included her media interviews about human rights; her participation in gatherings outside prisons before executions to support the families of death row prisoners; her connections with other human rights defenders including 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 in March 2014.

Narges Mohammadi has been denied contact with her thirteen-year-old twins who live with their father Taghi Rahmani in Paris. She suffers from a number of serious health problems, for which she requires specialized treatment that she cannot receive in prison. She has a medical condition that can cause seizures and temporary partial paralysis. Narges Mohammadi wrote an open letter from prison in which she says she was subjected to what would amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment during her transfer to Zanjan prison in December 2019 in apparent reprisal for participating in a peaceful sit-in in the women's ward of Evin prison to commemorate protesters killed by security forces in November 2019.

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

Mr Taghi Rahmani
c/o Iran Team
Amnesty International/ International Secretariat
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 0DW
United Kingdom

Nasrin Sotoudeh



Nasrin Sotoudeh, a prominent human rights lawyer and women's rights defender, who has represented a woman sentenced to a long prison term for protesting forced veiling, has been sentenced to a total of 38 years in prison on several spurious national security-related charges including "forming a group with the purpose of disrupting national security", "spreading propaganda against the system" and "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security." She was sentenced to 33 years, in addition to a previous five-year sentence for "assisting in hiding spies with the intent to harm national security" imposed in absentia, that she only learned about at the time of her arrest in June 2018. She has been in Evin Prison since then.

The most recent charges against Nasrin Sotoudeh stem from her peaceful human rights activities against forced veiling, including those undertaken in her role as a lawyer, such as meeting with her clients, which have been used to build a criminal case against her. The other national security-related charges relate to activities include belonging to human rights groups such as the Center for Human Rights Defenders and the Campaign for Step by Step Abolition of the Death Penalty.

Her trial, which took place in her absence on 30 December 2018 before Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran. The same court tried her in absentia in September 2016. In that earlier court verdict, the authorities accused her of working with "counter-revolutionaries" based inside and outside Iran to threaten national security, and of "holding secret meetings with foreign diplomats and people who were suspected of being intelligence officers based in foreign embassies in Tehran" under the "pretext" of human rights. It also stated that "she had been given €50,000 for the Sakharov Prize so that she could sustain her activities against national security and for the overthrow of the state" although Amnesty International understands that she has never received a monetary award for the prize.

In 2012, while serving a previous prison sentence in Evin prison, Nasrin Sotoudeh was awarded the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, jointly with Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi, by the European Parliament. In December 2018 the European Parliament overwhelmingly passed a motion urging the Iranian authorities to "immediately and unconditionally release Nasrin Sotoudeh; commends Nasrin Sotoudeh for her courage and commitment; urges the judiciary system of Iran to respect due process and fair trial and disclose information on the charges against Nasrin Sotoudeh."

Nasrin Sotoudeh, a mother of two, has defended Iranian Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi and other human rights activists, as well as juvenile offenders sentenced to death. In 2010, Nasrin Sotoudeh was sentenced to 11 years in prison (later reduced to 6 years on appeal) for the charges of "acting against national security," "collusion and propaganda against the regime," and

“membership in the Center for Human Rights Defenders.” She was granted early release in September 2013 after serving three years.

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 and represent their clients in a deeply flawed legal system.

Nasrin Sotoudeh’s husband, human rights defender Reza Khandan, was sentenced to five years in prison for “gathering and collusion with intent to commit crimes against national security” and one year for “spreading propaganda against the system” in relation to his support of the campaign against forced veiling. Mr. Khandan also campaigned for the release of his wife. He is currently out on bail and appealing his conviction and sentence.

In June 2019, Amnesty International organized the collection of more than one million petition signatures from people in more than 200 countries calling for the release of Nasrin Sotoudeh. These petitions were delivered to Iranian embassies around the world.

You can send Nowruz greetings for Nasrin Sotoudeh to:

c/o Iran Team
Amnesty International/ International Secretariat
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 0DW
United Kingdom

Niloufar Bayani



Wildlife conservationist Niloufar Bayani has been sentenced to ten years in prison, solely for her peaceful scientific and conservation activities, such as research on Iran's endangered wildlife. She is one of eight scientists who were convicted and sentenced to prison terms, ranging between four to ten years, on baseless charges of "cooperating with hostile states against the Islamic Republic."

Ms Bayani, aged 32, earned a Masters Degree in Conservation Biology from Columbia University and then worked as a consultant for the UN Environment Program in Geneva before returning to Iran in 2017 to work for the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation (PWHF), a non-profit organization that was operating in Tehran with the permission of the Iranian government.

Nine scientists who had worked with the PWHF and had been conducting research on Iran's endangered animals, including the Asiatic cheetah and Persian leopard were arrested by Iran's Revolutionary Guards in January 2018. One of them, Kavous Seyed-Emami, a Canadian-Iranian scientist and academic, died under suspicious circumstances in Evin prison two weeks after his arrest. The eight scientists' closed trial in a Revolutionary Court in Tehran began on 30 January 2019 and was grossly unfair; the evidence against them was almost entirely "confessions: allegedly made under torture and later retracted. Their prison terms were confirmed by an appeals court in February 2020.

Following their arrests, the conservationists were held incommunicado in Section 2-A of Evin prison, under the control of the Revolutionary Guards, without access to a lawyer and with very limited family contact. Niloufar Bayani told the court that she only made a "confession" after she was "broken" through physical and psychological torture and that she later retracted her "confession". She said interrogators threatened to beat her, inject her with hallucinogenic drugs, pull out her fingernails and arrest her parents.

The PWHF began using wildlife camera traps, deployed by researchers around the world, to track the intensely shy Asiatic cheetah amid concerns about its eroding natural habitat, which is threatened by Iran's expanding mining sector and growing road network. The cheetahs now number fewer than 50. The authorities accused the eight scientists of using scientific and environmental projects, such as tracking the Asiatic cheetah with cameras, as a cover to collect classified military information, even though the use of cameras is a standard tool used by conservationists to monitor rare and endangered species.

In May 2018, a governmental committee consisting of the ministers of intelligence, interior and justice and the president's legal deputy looked into detention of the conservationists and concluded that there was no evidence to suggest they were spies. A number of senior officials in the Iranian government, including from the department of the environment, have called for the

scientists' release citing a lack of evidence against them. The conservationists' imprisonment has been widely condemned by international environmentalist and human rights organizations including the UN and renowned primatologist Jane Goodall among 131 other conservationists.

Nowruz greetings to Niloufar Bayani can be sent to:

c/o Iran Team
Amnesty International/ International Secretariat
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 0DW
United Kingdom

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.

Since June 2016 Arash Sadeghi has been serving two prison sentences totaling 19 years in prison for his peaceful human rights activities. 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 has conducted hunger strikes to protest the treatment of his wife. He suffers from multiple health problems including 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 been deliberately denied proper care. In August 2018 he was diagnosed with bone cancer, for which he underwent an operation in September 2018. However he was returned to Raja’i Shahr prison before he was able to recover from surgery and has not been provided with the follow-up care recommended by doctors. He had been studying philosophy at Allameh Tabatabai University until he was banned from continuing his education because of his political activism; he was 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.

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. In March 2017 her sentence was reduced by 30 months as part of a Nowruz pardon. On 17 June 2019, Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee were unjustly convicted and sentenced to an additional three years and seven months imprisonment for “insulting the Supreme Leader” and “spreading propaganda against the system.” Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee is currently held in Shahr-e Rey prison.

Nowruz greetings to Golrokh and Arash can be sent:

Iran Team, Amnesty International/ International Secretariat
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 0DW
United Kingdom

Farhad Meysami



Farhad Meysami is a physician and women’s rights defender who has been sentenced to six years in prison after being convicted of “spreading propaganda against the system” and “gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security” for his support of the campaign against forced veiling. During his arrest in July 2018 security forces found badges that read “I am against forced *hijab*” in his possession. He was also charged with “insulting Islamic sanctities” because, according to the authorities, he “insulted” the *hijab*. In January 2019 his lawyer was notified that Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran sentenced him to six years imprisonment. He was also banned from social, political and internet activities, from contacting the media, and from travelling abroad for two years.

On 9 November 2019, Farhad Meysami was transferred to Raja’i Shahr prison, a maximum-security prison in Karaj, where he is being subjected to punitive measures including being held isolated in a room equipped with multiple surveillance cameras and having his access to natural light and fresh air restricted to only one hour each day. This was done in apparent reprisal after he wrote an open letter, along with trade unionists Mohammad Habibi, on 21 October 2019, about what they described as a “new wave of abuse” in Evin prison targeting prisoners of conscience.

In a letter from prison, Dr. Meysami explained that he was not demanding anything for himself. “I would gladly accept any prison sentence even in exile or under any other difficult conditions,” he wrote. “My only strict demand for ending my hunger strike is [for authorities to] drop the charges against [co-defendant] Mr. Reza Khandan and restore the warmth of his presence to his home and to his children.” An op-ed in the *Washington Post* in December 2018 said, “Meysami is a modern-day Mahatma Gandhi, dedicated to nonviolence, courageous in his defense of transcendent moral values — human rights in Iran and particularly equality for Iranian women — and ascetic in his aversion to worldly profits.”

Nowruz greetings to Farhad Meysami can be sent to:

Iran Team
Amnesty International International Secretariat
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 0DW
United Kingdom

Ahmadreza Djalali



Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, an Iranian-born Swedish citizen and specialist in emergency medicine, was sentenced to death in October 2017 after a grossly unfair trial. He was convicted of “spreading corruption on earth” (*efsad-e fel arz*) for spying. Amnesty International is urging the authorities to void the death sentence and echoes the recommendation of the United Nations to release him immediately.

Dr. Djalali, a physician, worked on improving hospitals’ emergency responses to armed terrorism and to radiological, chemical and biological threats and was a researcher at the Karolinska Institute of Medicine in Stockholm. He was on a trip to Iran at the invitation of Tehran University to speak about disaster medicine when he was arrested in April 2016, was held in Evin prison by Ministry of Intelligence officials for seven months, three of them in solitary confinement. He has said that during this period he did not have access to a lawyer and was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment to “confess” to being a spy. He was accused of providing information to Israel that was allegedly used in the assassination of several Iranian scientists. Iranian State television aired the “confession” in December 2017. His death sentence was confirmed in December 2017.

In an August 2017 letter written from inside Tehran’s Evin prison, Ahmadreza Djalali said he was held solely in reprisal for his refusal to use his scholastic and work ties in European academic and other institutions to spy for Iran. He wrote that he was asked by the Iranian authorities in 2014 to “cooperate with them to identify and gather intelligence from EU states...My answer was ‘no’ and I told them that I am just a scientist, not a spy.”

Dr. Djalali has suffered a number of severe health problems in prison and doctors from Evin Prison’s medical clinic have said he needs to be examined by outside specialists. Several UN human rights special rapporteurs appealed to the Iranian authorities to vacate his death sentence, citing concerns about the lack of due process at his trial, and called for his release. In a November 2017 letter, 175 Nobel Prize laureates called on Iranian authorities to release Dr. Djalali and in December 2018 Amnesty International distributed an open letter signed by 124 Nobel laureates to Iran’s supreme leader calling for his release at the Nobel Prize ceremony in Stockholm. In late July 2019 Dr Djalali was subjected to a week-long enforced disappearance, when Iranian authorities transferred him to an unidentified location. He was pressured to “confess” to new crimes and threatened with the implementation of his death sentence if he did not.

Nowruz greetings for Ahmadreza Djalali can be sent to his wife Vida Mehrannia:

Borgarfjordsgatan 21A
Stockholm kista 164 53
Sweden

Saba Kordafshari



Women’s rights defender Saba Kordafshari, aged 21, is serving a lengthy prison sentence for campaigning against Iran’s discriminatory and abusive forced veiling laws and other peaceful human rights activism. In August 2019 a Revolutionary Court sentenced her to 24 years in prison for “inciting and facilitating corruption and prostitution” through promoting “unveiling,” “gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security,” and “spreading propaganda against the system.” On appeal in November 2019, her sentence was reduced to nine years, seven of which she is required to serve per Iran’s sentencing guidelines.

Saba Kordafshari’s lower court trial was grossly unfair – she was not permitted to meet with her lawyer for over two months after her arrest. She was also barred from adequately preparing her defense as her lawyer was not permitted to review the court file until the day of trial on 19 August 2019 and was provided just one day’s notice of her trial date.

Following her arrest in June 2019, Saba Kordafshari was held in prolonged solitary confinement for 11 days in Vozara detention centre in Tehran where she was questioned about her communications with the Human Rights Activists News Agency, including sharing information about prison conditions that prison of conscience Alireza Shirmohammadali had provided her. She was also put under repeated pressure to denounce on camera the White Wednesdays campaign against compulsory veiling laws and denounce Masih Alinejad, a US-based Iranian journalist and founder of the White Wednesdays campaign. She was later moved to Shahr-e Ray prison, where women convicted of serious violent crimes are held in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions.

While in prison, she was pressured to give forced “confessions” and interrogators threatened to arrest her mother, Raheleh Ahmadi, if she did not “co-operate”. On 10 July 2019, the authorities carried out their threat and arrested Raheleh Ahmadi. Saba Kordafshari subsequently told her family that she had been held in an interrogation room with a sack over her head blocking her sight for much of the day when suddenly she could hear her mother being interrogated nearby. That is when she realized the Revolutionary Guards had carried through with their threat to arrest her mother, and she was forced to provide a “confession” before a camera. On 13 August 2019 she was transferred to the women’s ward of Evin prison.

Nowruz greetings to Saba Kordafshari can be sent to:

Iran Team
Amnesty International
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 0DW
United Kingdom