



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 accounts, tagging Amnesty International’s Iran account (@AmnestyIran) so that we can retweet you.

Our previous Nowruz actions have been very successful! Two of last year’s 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 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 sentence for a total of 16 years in prison. She was convicted of several spurious 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 in March 2014.

Earlier this year Narges Mohammadi was not able to communicate regularly with her twelve-year-old twins; after her arrest in 2015 they joined their father Taghi Rahmani in Paris, where he lives. 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 medical care. She has undergone hunger strikes to protest her treatment, including in January 2019 to protest the ongoing denial of medical care. She underwent gall bladder surgery in July 2018 and was hospitalized for a kidney problem in August 2018. Narges Mohammadi also has a neurological disorder that can result in seizures and temporary partial paralysis, and for which she needs to receive ongoing specialized medical care.

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

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 *hijab* (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 recently 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 *hijab*, 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 *hijab*. Mr. Khandan also campaigned for the release of his wife. He is currently out on bail and appealing his conviction and sentence.

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

Reza Khandan
Shahrak-e Ghods (Gharb)
Khiyaban-e Farahzad
Koocheh Baharan 2
Pelak 8, Vahed 4
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Zeynab Jalalian



Iranian Kurdish activist Zeynab Jalalian, aged 37, who is serving a life sentence imposed after a grossly unfair trial, is being deliberately prevented from receiving specialized medical care despite her deteriorating health. The authorities persistent refusal to give her needed medical treatment outside of prison constitutes torture.

Zeynab Jalalian was arrested in 2008 as a result of her work to empower Iran's ethnic minority Kurds, particularly women; for supporting the Kurdish struggle for self determination, and for her association with the political wing of the Kurdish opposition group Party for Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK) which also has an armed wing. She was sentenced to death in early 2009 by Branch One of the Revolutionary Court in Kermanshah Province. After a grossly unfair trial that last 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—based on her former connection with the political wing of PJAK. She was sentenced based on "confessions: she said were made after enduring months of torture and without a any evidence linking her to armed activities. She was also denied access while held in solitary confinement. Her death sentence was commuted to life in prison in late 2011.

Zeynab Jalalian suffers from the severe eye condition pterygium and urgently needs specialist surgery. She also suffers from blood pressure dips and spikes, heart, intestinal and kidney problems as well as an oral thrush condition. However the authorities have denied her needed medical care 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.

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.

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 cruelly returned to Raja’i Shahr prison, against physicians’ recommendation, before he was able to recover from surgery. 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.

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. She undertook a hunger strike in February 2018 to protest her transfer to Shahr-e Rey prison, formerly used as a chicken house, where women convicted of violent offenses are held in inhumane conditions. In May 2018 she was returned to Evin Prison.

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

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 *hijab*. 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. He is currently in Evin Prison.

He undertook a five-month long hunger strike from the time of his arrest in protest of his unlawful detention. He ended his hunger strike in December 2018 when women's rights defender Reza Khandan was released from prison on bail. Dr. Meysami's health has significantly deteriorated as a result of his prolonged hunger strike, but the authorities have refused to allow him access to adequate medical care.

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

Atena Daemi



Iranian women's 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. 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. Atena Daemi has suffered from a number of medical problems including oral and gum infections, vision difficulties, prolonged numbness on the right side of her body, and abscesses on her chest, for which doctors have said she needs to receive ultrasounds every six months. She was one of the cases in Amnesty International's 2018 Write4Rights campaign and conveyed her thanks for the many messages of support: "Many thanks for selecting me as one of 10 human rights defenders worldwide as part of Amnesty International's Write for Rights. I am wholeheartedly grateful to Amnesty International and all people around the world who have showered me with compassion and kindness and spared no effort in supporting me."

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

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 2019 his lawyer filed a request for judicial review of his case to the Supreme Court.

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 recently underwent emergency hernia surgery. Following blood tests indicating a low white blood cell count, doctors from Evin Prison’s medical clinic have said he needs to be examined by specialists outside of prison. 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 the release of Dr. Djalali at the Nobel Prize ceremony in Stockholm.

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

Borgarfjordsgatan 21A
Stockholm kista 164 53
Sweden