



To:

Ms. Margaret Satterthwaite
UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers
Email: hrc-sr-independencejl@un.org

Ms. Mary Lawlor
UN Special Rapporteur on the situation
of Human Rights Defenders
Email: defenders@ohchr.org

Ms. Marija Pejčinović Burić
Secretary General of the Council of Europe
Fax: + 33 (0)3 88 41 27 99

Ms. Dunja Mijatović
Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe
Email: commissioner@coe.int

Ms. Roberta Metsola
President of the European Parliament
Email: roberta.metsola@europarl.europa.eu

Mr. Charles Michel
President of the European Council
Email: ec.president@consilium.europa.eu

Ms. Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission
Email: ec-president-vdl@ec.europa.eu

Mr. Juan Fernando López Aguilar
President LIBE Committee of the European Parliament
Email: juanfernando.lopezaguilar@europarl.europa.eu

Venice, 02/03/2023

Re: Urgent request for intervention in favour of Mr. Reza Khandan

Dear all,

The undersigned organizations urge you to take concrete and urgent action in the case of Reza Khandan¹, well-

¹ See International Bar Association, "[Iran: IBAHRI condemns prison sentence against Reza Khandan and calls for charges to be dropped](#)"; PEN America, "[PEN America Condemns Prison Summons Issued to Reza Khandan, Husband to Prominent Iranian Human Rights Lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh](#)".

known human rights activist in Iran and husband of the prominent lawyer and human rights defender Nasrin Sotoudeh².

On Tuesday, 14 February, the media broke the news that he has been summoned to prison³.

In September 2018, Khandan was arrested and charged with “*spreading propaganda against the system*” and “*colluding to commit crimes against national security*,” after posting several updates about his wife’s June 2018 arrest online and protesting against the mandatory hijab law by producing and distributing pins that read: ‘*I stand against the compulsory hijab*’⁴.

He was released on bail in December 2018⁵, but in January 2019 was sentenced to six years in prison with another activist, Farhad Meysami⁶.

Just a couple of weeks ago, his wife Nasrin Sotoudeh appeared on CNN to call for the release of Meysami whose life was gravely at risk after a lengthy hunger strike while in prison⁷; he was freed from the infamous and overcrowded Evin Prison on February 10⁸.

The Iranian authorities must rescind the summons of Reza Khandan, drop all the charges against him and his wife Nasrin Sotoudeh and stop persecuting them for their efforts to protect, *inter alia*, women from discrimination and humiliation to which they are subjected in contravention of the principle of civilisation enshrined in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ratified by Iran in 1948, according to which ‘*all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights*’ where dignity comes even before rights.

Likewise, the international community, including the EU given its ongoing dialogue with Iran, must condemn all forms of violence, including executions, discrimination and persecution, recognizing the freedoms of thought, conscience, religion, expression, assembly and association, as well as the right to a fair trial, as foundations of civilised living.

We Colleagues, Magistrates, NGOs and civil society are united and firm in denouncing these violations of fundamental rights and freedoms and supporting human rights defenders. We ask for a concrete stance from you, an incisive commitment to end the judicial harassment of Reza Khandan and Nasrin Sotoudeh, recalling the tenets of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers on the therein enshrined States’ responsibility⁹.

² **Nasrin Sotoudeh**, 59, mother of two, Iranian distinguished human rights lawyer, was arrested on June 13, 2018 after she represented a woman facing imprisonment for peacefully protesting against Iran’s compulsory hijab law by removing it in public. Sotoudeh was informed that she had been detained based on a **5 year prison** sentence that was issued against her *in absentia* in 2015 by a Revolutionary Court judge on the following charge: “*espionage in hiding*”.

On March 9, 2019, she received a copy of a court ruling issued after a one-day hearing held *in absentia* on December 30, 2018, by Branch 28 of the Islamic Revolution Court in Tehran. The Court found her guilty and sentenced her to **33 years in prison and 148 lashes** on the following seven charges: “*gathering and collusion against national security*” (Article 610 of the Islamic Penal Code), “*spreading propaganda against the system*” (Article 500), “*effective membership of the illegal and anti-security splinter groups Defenders of Human Rights Centre, LEGAM and National Council of Peace*” (Article 498); “*encouraging people to commit corruption and prostitution, and providing the means for it*” (Article 639), “*appearing without the sharia-sanctioned hijab at the premises of the magistrate’s office*” (Article 638); “*disrupting public order and calm*” (Article 618) and “*spreading falsehoods with intent to disturb the public opinion*” (Article 698).

She is currently serving her sentence although she is on medical furlough since July 2021, and continues to advocate for people’s basic human rights.

For her commitment to the defence of human rights she has been honoured internationally with prestigious awards such as PEN America’s 2011 Freedom to Write, the Sakharov Prize of the European Parliament in 2012, the International Human Rights Prize “Ludovic Trarieux” in 2018, the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) Human Rights Award in 2019 and the Right Livelihood Award in 2020.

³ A. Moshaghian, “*Husband of prominent Iranian human rights lawyer summoned by judiciary*”, CNN.

⁴ GCHR, “*Iran: Human rights defender Reza Khandan arrested and Nasrin Sotoudeh remains on hunger strike*”.

⁵ FIDH, “*Iran: Release on bail of Reza Khandan*”.

⁶ Radio Farda, “*Two Prominent Rights Activists Sentenced to Six Year Each*”.

⁷ S. Noor Haq, “*They still want a regime change. Iranian human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh says the anger behind Iran’s protests remains*”, CNN.

⁸ J. Hallam, A. Moshaghian, N. Kennedy, “*Iran frees dissident Farhad Meysami after photos of his emaciated condition cause outrage online*”, CNN.

⁹ **Resolution n. 53/144** adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1998, Article 2 “1. Each State has a prime responsibility and duty to protect, promote and implement all human rights and fundamental freedoms, *inter alia*, by adopting such steps as may be necessary to create all conditions necessary in the social, economic, political and other fields, as well as the legal guarantees required to ensure that all persons under its jurisdiction, individually and in association with others, are able to enjoy all those rights and freedoms in practice. 2. Each State shall adopt such legislative, administrative and other steps as may be necessary to ensure that the rights and freedoms referred to in the present Declaration are effectively guaranteed.”

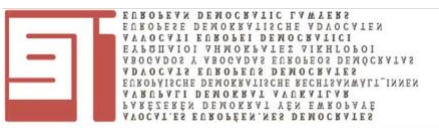
If we do not defend human rights defenders, who will defend human rights?¹⁰

We thank you for your attention and we rely on your prompt and effective intervention.

Best regards,



Asociación Americana de Juristas



Avocats Européens Démocrates / European Democratic Lawyers



Avocats Sans Frontières



Là où la défense n'a plus la parole

Avocats Sans Frontières / France



Consiglio Nazionale Forense / Italian National Bar Council



Défense Sans Frontière-Avocats Solidaires / France

¹⁰ Quote from Rosemary Nelson, lawyer and human rights defender killed by a car bomb in Lurgan, Northern Ireland, in 1999.



European Criminal Bar Association



European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights



Fédération des Barreaux d'Europe



Foundation Day of the Endangered Lawyer



International Association of People's Lawyers (IAPL), Monitoring Committee on Attacks on Lawyers



International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)



Institut des Droits de l'Homme, Barreau de Bruxelles / Belgium



Institut des Droits de l'Homme des Avocats Européens (IDHAE)



Magistrats Européens pour la Démocratie et les Libertés



New York City Bar Association / United States of America



Observatoire International des Avocats en Danger / International Observatory for Lawyers (OIAD)



Ordine degli Avvocati di Venezia / Italy



Progressive Lawyers' Association / Turkey



Rechtsanwaltskammer Berlin /Germany



Rechtsanwältinnen und Rechtsanwälte für Demokratie und Menschenrechte (RAV) / Germany



Osservatorio Avvocati Minacciati
Osservatorio Europa

Union of the Italian Criminal Chambers – Endangered Lawyers Observatory and Europe Observatory / Italy