

Berlin
November 12, 2020



**To His Excellency Dr. Hassan Rouhani
President of the Islamic Republic of Iran**

Your Excellency,

We, the undersigned members of the German Bundestag, are writing to express our deep concern at the plight of Iranian human rights lawyer and renowned activist, Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh, who has been serving a lengthy prison sentence in retaliation for her peaceful human rights work. Her health condition has been critically worsening over recent months and her life has been in grave danger. We take note with appreciation of Ms. Sotoudeh's recent release for a temporary medical leave, even if it came with significant delay. Today, we demand that she be unconditionally and permanently released and that all charges against her be dropped. She shouldn't have been in prison in the first place.

Ms. Sotoudeh has been sentenced to 38 years in prison and 148 lashes on charges relating to various national security offenses. This is one of the longest sentences the judiciary has handed down to a human rights activist in recent years.

On August 11, 2020, Ms. Sotoudeh began a hunger strike to protest against the dire prison conditions and to demand the release of political prisoners whose health is severely threatened by the COVID-19 pandemic. Her demands were met with silence by your government. As a result, on September 19, Ms. Sotoudeh was taken to the hospital following a severe deterioration in her health. Four days later, she was transferred back to Evin prison without receiving proper medical care. Her family was denied access to her and to any information on her condition. On October 20, she was transferred to Qarchak prison, where healthcare services and standards for the treatment of prisoners are far worse than in Evin prison.

On Saturday, November 7, Ms. Sotoudeh was unexpectedly released from prison for a temporary medical leave, during which we hope she will finally receive the medical treatment that she has long been denied. We deplore that she can be ordered back to prison anytime.

During the last 15 years, Ms. Sotoudeh has defended numerous political prisoners, opposition activists and journalists who were persecuted by the authorities. Her insistence on standing for the rule of law and against oppression has made her a symbol of the struggle for justice in Iran. This is not the first time she is facing reprisals for her remarkable work, which has gained her wide international recognition. This year, she received the 2020 Right Livelihood Award, while the European Parliament awarded her the Sakharov Prize in 2012 for her courage in defending her own and others' basic freedoms.

The detention of Ms. Sotoudeh must be placed in the context of a broader pattern of crackdown on and intimidation of peaceful activists, as well as of criminalisation of any form of dissent. Furthermore, the severe restrictions on women's rights, as well as the use of the death penalty and widespread torture in detention, remain of serious concern to us. In this regard, we deplore that Iran did not support Germany's UPR recommendation to ratify core international human rights conventions, in particular the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. This failure to align with international human rights standards is harming all Iranians.

As the COVID-19 pandemic is worsening and making everyday life increasingly difficult for the Iranian population, human rights defenders should be respected as essential workers and, as stressed by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, included in the solution to the crisis, rather than targeted by the government.

We are deeply concerned that despite the international community's numerous calls to reverse her sentence, Ms. Sotoudeh is still a victim of injustice. Therefore, in light of the aforementioned considerations, we urge your good offices to:

- Permanently release Ms. Sotoudeh, drop all charges against her, and afford her and her family their enforceable rights to compensation and rehabilitation for the harm suffered;
- Uphold, in every circumstance, Ms. Sotoudeh's right to the highest attainable standard of health by providing her with prompt and adequate medical care;
- Align with your international human rights obligations and guarantee that all human rights defenders in Iran are able to carry out their legitimate activities, in all circumstances, without fears of reprisals, and free of all restrictions, including deprivation of liberty, intimidation and judicial harassment.

We express our full solidarity with Ms. Sotoudeh, and we will continue to stand by her and all other human rights defenders pursuing the respect of fundamental freedoms for all Iranians.

Yours sincerely,

Claudia Roth, Vice-President of the German Bundestag, Die Grünen

Dr. Anton Hofreiter, Chairperson of the Parliamentary group of Die Grünen

Michael Brand, CDU

Omid Nouripour, Die Grünen

Stefan Schmidt, Die Grünen

Kai Gehring, Die Grünen

Wolfgang Wetzels, Die Grünen

Filiz Polat, Die Grünen

Ingrid Nestle, Die Grünen

Tabea Röbner, Die Grünen

Renate Künast, Die Grünen

Harald Ebner, Die Grünen

Kordula Schulz-Asche, Die Grünen

Claudia Müller, Die Grünen

Dr. Bettina Hoffmann, Die Grünen

Chris Kühn, Die Grünen

Dr. Danyal Bayaz, Die Grünen

Dr. Kirsten Kappert-Gonther, Die Grünen

Stefan Gelbhaar, Die Grünen

Margit Stumpp, Die Grünen

Sylvia Kotting-Uhl, Die Grünen

Steffi Lemke, Die Grünen

Luise Amtsberg, Die Grünen

Manuela Rottmann, Die Grünen

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Sven Lehmann, Die Grünen

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Gyde Jensen, FDP

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Dr. Daniela De Ridder, SPD

Christoph Matschie, SPD

Bärbel Kofler, SPD

Anke Domscheit-Berg, Die Linke

Gysi Gregor, Die Linke