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London, 1/10/2020

Re: Urgent request for intervention in favour of Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh

Dear all,

The European Criminal Bar Association, on the initiative of the Italian Criminal Lawyers Association, urges you to take a concrete and urgent action on the case of the Iranian lawyer **Nasrin Sotoudeh**, sentenced in her country to 38 years in prison and 148 lashes, for crimes such as "collusion against national security", "propaganda against the State", "incitement to corruption and prostitution" and "appearing in public without hijab".

The reality is that **Nasrin is committed to defend human rights**, especially of the weakest ones: a commitment that has also been awarded internationally with prestigious awards such as the Sakharov Prize of the European Parliament in 2012 and the International Human Rights Prize "Ludovic Trarieux" in 2018.

We would like to remind that **lawyers play a fundamental role** as sentinels and promoters of rights and their function must be protected, certainly not hindered:

*“In a society founded on respect for the rule of law the lawyer fulfils a special role (...). A lawyer must serve the interests of justice as well as those whose rights and liberties he or she is trusted to assert and defend (...). **Respect for the lawyer’s professional function is an essential condition for the rule of law and democracy in society.**” (CCBE Code of Conduct for European Lawyers, Art.1.1.)*

And,

*“**Governments shall ensure that lawyers** (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions **without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference;** (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.” (Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, United Nations, principle 16)*

Nasrin not only finds herself serving a cruel and groundless sentence; **her health, both physical and psychological, is rapidly deteriorating.** In a context of health emergency due to Covid-19, Nasrin has become the spokesperson for all political prisoners demanding their release and has started a **hunger strike.** As reported by her husband, Reza Khandan, through social media, Nasrin was not spared even in the hospital, where she was given inhumane treatment: no contact with family members, insults and shoving, subversion of hospital protocols under the continuous threat of the national security forces. We were updated that, very recently, Nasrin was taken back from the hospital to prison, in extreme health conditions.

The immediate reaction of the Authorities to make her retrace her steps was to arrest her daughter Mehraveh and detain her for a whole day before releasing her on bail for an alleged altercation with the prison guards who wanted to impose her the use of the hijab.

For these reasons - as she stated in a letter - after enduring 46 days of hunger and subsequent hospitalization, she unwillingly ended her strike on Friday, September 25th.

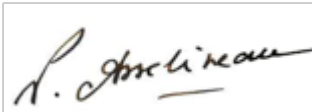
It is still too vivid in our minds the memory of our Turkish colleague **Ebru Timtik**, unjustly persecuted and passed away after 238 days of hunger strike. We must prevent such events from happening again, we do not want to mourn a new victim but rather to celebrate a newfound companion in battles for the rights and freedoms of everybody.

We colleagues, NGOs, civil society, are united and firm in denouncing these crimes and supporting human rights defenders; however, we are here to ask for a **concrete stance from you**, an incisive commitment that can put an end to the tragic situation in which Nasrin finds herself.

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

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

Vincent Asselineau, Chair of the ECBA



Alexis Anagnostakis, the ECBA Human Right Officer

Alexis A. Anagnostakis