

To Your Excellency
the Chief Justice of the Islamic Republic of Iran,
Honourable Ebrahim Raisi

Lisbon, the 19th March 2019

Excellency,

The **Portuguese Association of Women in Legal Careers** (P.A.W.J.) is writing you to express its profound concern with the criminal conviction of **Nasrin Sotoudeh** a prominent human rights lawyer and women's rights defender to 34 years in jail and 148 lashes.

The **Portuguese Association of Women in Legal Careers** joins the Amnesty International appeal for her immediate release, as she is a prisoner of conscience.

As Amnesty International has informed « Nasrin Sotoudeh has been prosecuted on seven charges, some of which are related to her opposition to forced hijab laws, including "inciting corruption and prostitution" and "openly committing a sinful act... by appearing in public without a hijab".

Some of her legitimate activities that the authorities have cited as "evidence" against her include: opposing forced hijab; removing her headscarf during prison visits, defending women who peacefully protested against forced hijab; giving media interviews about the violent arrest and detention of women protesting against forced hijab; and placing flowers at the scene where a woman protester was violently arrested. Other charges brought against her include "forming a group with the purpose of disrupting national

security" and are based, in part, on her work with three human rights groups including the Campaign for Step by Step Abolition of the Death Penalty.

Following her arrest, the authorities informed Nasrin Sotoudeh for the first time that, in September 2016, Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran had convicted her, in her absence, in a separate case and sentenced her to five years in prison. She was not present during that trial because, on the day of the hearing, the court authorities said she was not wearing appropriate Islamic dress and refused her entry. She had initially been charged with "spreading propaganda against the system" and "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security".

However, the judge, in breach of procedure, convicted her on another charge, that of "assisting in hiding spies with the intent to harm national security", citing legitimate activities such as her meetings with foreign diplomats to convict her. This case is now before an appeal court.»

Therefore, the **Portuguese Association of Women in Legal Careers** urges you to release Nasrin Sotoudeh immediately and unconditionally, as she is a prisoner of conscience, jailed solely for her peaceful human rights work.

The **Portuguese Association of Women in Legal Careers** calls you, also, that pending her release, please ensure that she has regular contact with her family and a lawyer of her choosing.

Finally, the **Portuguese Association of Women in Legal Careers** urges you to stop criminalizing the work of women's rights defenders, including those who peacefully protest against forced hijab, and abolish forced hijab laws.

The **Portuguese Association of Women in Legal Careers** is a Portuguese national NGO, member of the **International Federation of Women in Legal Careers**. It inspires its activities in the United Nations Charter principles, as they are consecrated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reaffirmed in the Convention on the Elimination of All

Forms of Discrimination against Women.

*The **Portuguese Association of Women in Legal Careers** essentials goals are the eradication of all forms of discrimination against Women and the promotion of Women Human Rights.*

Respectfully,

The P.A.W.J. President of the Board



Maria Teresa Féria de Almeida