



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 and Instagram accounts, tagging Amnesty International’s Iran account (@AmnestyIran and <https://www.instagram.com/amnestyiran/?hl=en>) so that we can retweet and share your messages.

Our previous Nowruz actions have been very successful! Narges Mohammadi, featured in last year’s Nowruz action, was released in October 2020. Two of the 2018 subjects—Abdolfattah Soltani and Reza Shahabi—were released from prison. 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.

Zeynab Jalalian



Iranian Kurdish activist Zeynab Jalalian, aged 39, who is serving a life sentence following a grossly unfair trial, is being deliberately prevented from receiving specialized medical care despite her deteriorating health, including lung damage and respiratory problems as a result of having contracted Covid-19 in June 2020. Authorities have conditioned access to proper medical care and transfer back to a prison closer to her family on her making a videotaped “confession” and on agreeing to work with the Ministry of Intelligence.

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 any evidence linking her to armed activities. She was also denied access to a lawyer in solitary confinement during pre-trial detention. Her death sentence was commuted to life in prison in late 2011.

In addition to the after effects of Covid-19, 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. Authorities have transferred her to four different prisons in the last several months, and she is currently in Yazd Prison, nearly 900 miles from her family.

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:

Yazd Prison
Women’s Ward
End of Imam Street, After Imam Reza Square, Opposite Imam Janab Terminal
Yazd, Yazd Province
Islamic Republic of Iran

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 veiling, has been sentenced to a total of 38 1/2 years in prison following two grossly unfair trials in 2016 and 2018, on 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."

The most recent case against Nasrin Sotoudeh stem from her peaceful human rights activities against forced veiling, including those undertaken in her role as a lawyer, such as meeting with her clients, which were used to build a criminal case against her. The other national security-related charges relate to 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.

Nasrin Sotoudeh's trial took place in her absence on 30 December 2018 before Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran. The same court also 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.

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 veiling. Mr. Khandan also campaigned for the release of his wife. He is currently out on bail.

Nasrin Sotoudeh undertook a long hunger strike in August and September 2020 to protest the detention of other prisoners of conscience and suffered severe health problems; instead of providing adequate medical care, Iranian authorities transferred her to Shahr-e Rey (Gharchak) Prison, a disused industrial chicken farm known for its poor conditions. She was granted a medical furlough in November 2020, during which she tested positive for Covid-19, but was required to return to Shahr-e Rey in December 2020. She was granted another short furlough in January 2021. She remains in poor health.

In June 2019, Amnesty International organized the collection of more than one million petition signatures from people in more than 200 countries calling for the release of Nasrin Sotoudeh. These petitions were delivered to Iranian embassies around the world. 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.

You can send Nowruz greetings for Nasrin Sotoudeh to:

Nasrin Sotoudeh
c/o Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the UN
622 3rd Ave 34th floor
New York, NY 10017

Niloufar Bayani



Wildlife conservationist Niloufar Bayani is a prisoner of conscience, sentenced to prison solely for her peaceful scientific and conservation activities, such as research on Iran's endangered wildlife. She is one of eight scientists who were convicted and sentenced to prison terms, ranging between four to ten years, on baseless charges of "cooperating with hostile states against the Islamic Republic."

Ms Bayani, aged 33, earned a Masters Degree in Conservation Biology from Columbia University and then worked as a consultant for the UN Environment Program in Geneva before returning to Iran in 2017 to work for the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation (PWHF), a non-profit organization that was operating in Tehran with the permission of the Iranian government.

Nine scientists who had worked with the PWHF and had been conducting research on Iran's endangered animals, including the Asiatic cheetah and Persian leopard were arrested by Iran's Revolutionary Guards in January 2018. One of them, Kavous Seyed-Emami, a Canadian-Iranian scientist and academic, died under suspicious circumstances in Evin prison two weeks after his arrest. The eight scientists' closed trial in a Revolutionary Court in Tehran began on 30 January 2019 and was grossly unfair; the evidence against them was almost entirely "confessions: allegedly made under torture and later retracted. Their prison terms were confirmed by an appeals court in February 2020.

Following their arrests, the conservationists were held incommunicado in Section 2-A of Evin prison, under the control of the Revolutionary Guards, without access to a lawyer and with very limited family contact. Niloufar Bayani told the court that she only made a "confession" after she was "broken" through physical and psychological torture and that she later retracted her "confession". She said interrogators threatened to beat her, inject her with hallucinogenic drugs, pull out her fingernails and arrest her parents.

The PWHF began using wildlife camera traps, deployed by researchers around the world, to track the intensely shy Asiatic cheetah amid concerns about its eroding natural habitat, which is threatened by Iran's expanding mining sector and growing road network. The cheetahs now number fewer than 50. The authorities accused the eight scientists of using scientific and environmental projects, such as tracking the Asiatic cheetah with cameras, as a cover to collect classified military information, even though the use of cameras is a standard tool used by conservationists to monitor rare and endangered species.

In May 2018, a governmental committee consisting of the ministers of intelligence, interior and justice and the president's legal deputy looked into detention of the conservationists and concluded that there was no evidence to suggest they were spies. A number of senior officials in

the Iranian government, including from the department of the environment, have called for the scientists' release citing a lack of evidence against them. The conservationists' imprisonment has been widely condemned by international environmentalist and human rights organizations including the UN and renowned primatologist Jane Goodall among 131 other conservationists.

Nowruz greetings to Niloufar Bayani can be sent to:

Niloufar Bayani
c/o Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the UN
622 3rd Ave 34th floor
New York, NY 10017

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.

Arash Sadeghi had been studying philosophy at Allameh Tabatabai University until he was banned from continuing his education because of his political activism. 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. While in prison, he has suffered 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 was 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 returned to Raja’i Shahr prison before he was able to recover from surgery. During pre-trial detention, he reported being subjected to severe torture. He was hung from the ceiling by one leg and beaten, resulting in a dislocated shoulder and broken teeth. 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.

In August 2015 Golrokh Ebrahimi 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. In March 2017 her sentence was reduced by 30 months as part of a Nowruz pardon and she was subsequently released in April 2019, only to be convicted and sentenced in June 2019 to an additional three years and seven months imprisonment for “insulting the Supreme Leader” and “spreading propaganda against the system” for her activities while in prison. She started serving that sentence in November 2019, first at Shahr-e Rey Prison, then in Evin Prison where she was reportedly subjected to lengthy interrogations by Revolutionary Guards, and since January 2021 in Amol Prison in Northern Iran.

Nowruz greetings to Golrokh and Arash can be sent: to

Arash Sadeghi and Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee
c/o Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the UN
622 3rd Ave 34th floor
New York, NY 10017

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 veiling. 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.

On 9 November 2019, Farhad Meysami was transferred to Raja’i Shahr prison in Karaj, where he is being subjected to punitive measures including being held isolated in a room equipped with multiple surveillance cameras and having his access to natural light and fresh air restricted to only one hour each day. This was done in apparent reprisal after he wrote an open letter, along with trade unionists Mohammad Habibi, on 21 October 2019, about what they described as a “new wave of abuse” in Evin prison targeting prisoners of conscience.

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.” In October 2020, VOA News reported that Dr. Meysami had tested positive for Covid-19, as had many other prisoners in Iran.

Nowruz greetings to Farhad Meysami can be sent to:

Farhad Meysami
c/o Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the UN
622 3rd Ave 34th floor
New York, NY 10017

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. He barely escaped an execution scheduled to take place on December 1, 2020 after an international outcry, including a letter signed by 153 Nobel science prizes laureates. He is being held in solitary confinement at Evin Prison and remains at high risk of execution.

Dr. Djalali, was involved in 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 and subsequently 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 forced “confession” in December 2017. His death sentence was confirmed by the Supreme Court the same month.

In an August 2017 letter written from inside 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. Amnesty International calls for Dr. Djalali’s conviction and sentence to be quashed, and for him to be immediately released and afforded an enforceable right to compensation, per the recommendation of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. 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 his release 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

Saba Kordafshari



Women’s rights defender Saba Kordafshari, aged 23, is serving a lengthy prison sentence for campaigning against Iran’s discriminatory and abusive forced veiling laws and other peaceful human rights activism. In August 2019 a Revolutionary Court sentenced her to 24 years in prison for “inciting and facilitating corruption and prostitution” through promoting “unveiling,” “gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security,” and “spreading propaganda against the system.” In November 2019, her sentence was reduced on appeal to nine years, but in May 2020 she learned that judicial authorities had unlawfully and secretly increased her prison sentence back to 24 years by altering the previous appeal court verdict.

Saba Kordafshari’s lower court trial was grossly unfair – she was not permitted to meet with her lawyer for over two months after her arrest. She was also barred from adequately preparing her defense as her lawyer was not permitted to review the court file until the day of trial on 19 August 2019 and was provided just one day’s notice of her trial date.

Following her arrest in June 2019, Saba Kordafshari was held in prolonged solitary confinement for 11 days in Vozara detention center in Tehran where she was questioned about her communications with the Human Rights Activists News Agency. She was also put under repeated pressure to denounce on camera the White Wednesdays campaign against compulsory veiling laws and denounce Masih Alinejad, a US-based Iranian journalist and founder of the White Wednesdays campaign. She was later moved to Shahr-e Rey prison, where women convicted of serious violent crimes are held in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions.

While in prison, she was pressured to give forced “confessions” and interrogators threatened to arrest her mother, women’s rights defender Raheleh Ahmadi, if she did not “co-operate”. On 10 July 2019, the authorities carried out their threat and arrested Raheleh Ahmadi. Saba Kordafshari subsequently told her family that she had been held in an interrogation room with a sack over her head blocking her sight for much of the day when suddenly she could hear her mother being interrogated nearby. That is when she realized the Revolutionary Guards had carried through with their threat to arrest her mother, and she was forced to provide a “confession” before a camera. In August 2019 Saba Kordafshari was transferred to the women’s ward of Evin prison but was sent back to Shahr-e Rey in December 2020 while her mother remains in Evin Prison, serving a sentence for her peaceful human rights work.

Nowruz greetings to Saba Kordafshari can be sent to:

Saba Kordafshari
c/o Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the UN
622 3rd Ave 34th floor
New York, NY 10017