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Iran - Nasrin Sotoudeh's request for bail rejected following charges on national security

On 7 November 2023 woman human rights defender **Nasrin Sotoudeh's** request for bail was rejected by the prosecutor at Branch 29 of Tehran Revolutionary Court. The woman human rights defender, who was detained after attending the funeral of Armita Geravand, was arrested together with 23 other women, including journalists and civil society actors, most of whom have been granted bail.

[Nasrin Sotoudeh](#) is a prominent human rights lawyer, who has dedicated her legal career to representing opposition activists, women's rights activists, young prisoners who were sentenced to death for crimes committed when they were minors, and women who peacefully protested against the country's obligatory veiling rules.

On 7 November 2023, the request of Nasrin Sotoudeh to be released on bail was rejected by the prosecutor at Branch 29 of Tehran Revolutionary Court. The woman human rights defender was arrested on 29 October 2023 together with 23 other women, including journalists and civil society actors, in Tehran. During her arrest, the woman human rights defender was beaten by police, who used taser batons on the lawyer. Her prescription glasses were broken and she was held in a police van for seven hours, banned from entering the prosecutor's office on the pretext of not having worn a head scarf. She was issued with two arbitrary charges of "disturbing the public order" and "disobeying police order." The woman human rights defender was subsequently transferred to Qrachak prison where she has been held since.

While the initial charges brought against the woman human rights defender in the police van comprised of "disturbing the public order" and "disobeying police order," on account of her attendance at the funeral of Armita Geravand, her lawyer has since announced that two other charges of "gathering and colluding against the national security" and "propaganda activities against state" have also been arbitrarily levelled against the woman human rights defender by Branch 29 of Tehran Revolutionary Court, amounting to an utter violation of due process.

Additionally, on 5 November 2023, while in detention in Qarchak prison, the woman human rights defender received a summons from Branch 1097 of Ershad Judicial Complex, the criminal department II, to present herself on 4 December 2023. Although it is still not clear what the charges brought against her by this criminal court are, there is speculation that this might pertain to her disobedience in refusing to wear her obligatory hijab during the funeral of Armita Geravand.

While serving her ten-year prison sentence, the woman human rights defender was granted a number of medical furloughs in 2021. The latest of these commenced on 21 July 2021 and was subsequently renewed two further times, causing her sentence to be suspended from November 2021 for however long this medical condition may persist.

Nasrin Sotoudeh has been imprisoned multiple times as a result of her human rights work, most recently on 13 June 2018, when she was arrested and sentenced in two different trials to 38 years in prison, and 148 lashes, after being convicted of eight different offences, including "espionage" and "membership of an illegal group". The latter offence refers to her membership of Legam, an organisation that campaigns to abolish the death penalty in Iran. According to Article 134 of the Islamic Penal Code she will serve only the longest of her sentences, which is 10 years.

The woman human rights defender had served time in prison from 2018 to 2021, for the ten year prison sentence in question and, according to a by-law directive on the judicial system which was ratified on 11 May 2020, she may be eligible for conditional release after having served just one third of her sentence. However, given the high number of charges against her, it is unclear how much of the old sentence she will be expected to serve, following her recent arrest.

Front Line Defenders is extremely worried about the continuous judicial harassment of Nasrin Sotoudeh including arbitrary arrest, physical assault, prosecution and violations of due process, including the infringement of her right to a transparent hearing for all charges, and the denial of bail. Front Line Defenders is particularly concerned for the physical welfare of the woman human rights defender given her vulnerable health, namely her lung condition for which she requires medication. The health conditions that she is experiencing are considered to have been aggravated by the poor living conditions for detainees in Qarchak prison. In protest against these conditions and the arbitrary nature of her arrest, the woman human rights defender has refrained from taking her medication since her arrest on 29 October 2023.

Front Line Defenders believes that the arrest of Nasrin Sotoudeh during a funeral is in utter violation of the woman human rights defender's right to freedom of assembly. We believe she is being targeted as a result of her peaceful human rights work, including for women's rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Iran to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release human rights defender Nasrin Sotoudeh and quash the convictions against her;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Nasrin Sotoudeh, while in detention, adheres to the conditions in accordance with international human rights law standards;
3. Ensure Nasrin Sotoudeh is granted his legitimate right to access to her court proceedings in advance and in accordance with the principles of fair trial and due process;
4. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Iran and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities.