

PRESS RELEASE

Iran Human Rights Documentation Center Calls for Release of Nasrin Sotoudeh and Houtan Kian

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT - The Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC) condemns the continued unwarranted detention of human rights lawyers Nasrin Sotoudeh and Houtan Kian.

Sotoudeh, a prominent lawyer and human rights activist, was arrested on September 7, 2010, after being summoned for interrogation at Evin prison in Tehran. She is charged with endangering national security, collusion intended to disrupt security and cooperation with the Defenders of Human Rights Center (DHRC)—a group dedicated to defending the rights of women, political prisoners and minorities in Iran. In detention, officials have pressured Sotoudeh to cease her legal representation of one of the founders of the DHRC, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi, who herself has been unable to return to Iran following the disputed presidential election of summer 2009. Since September 25, 2010, Sotoudeh has been on a hunger strike to protest her detention, and she is reported to be in poor health.

Kian represents Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, an Iranian widow whose sentence to death by stoning on charges of adultery provoked widespread international condemnation last summer. Kian was arrested in his office in Tabriz, Iran on October 10, 2010. The location where Kian is being held and the charges against him are unknown.

“In recent months, penalizing lawyers for simply defending their clients has become a frequent practice of the Iranian regime,” said Renee Redman, Executive Director at IHRDC. “The Iranian government should allow lawyers to carry out their duties without the specter of arrest hanging over their heads. The lawyers currently detained on spurious grounds should be released immediately.”

The arrest of Sotoudeh follows the unlawful arrests of other defense lawyers affiliated with DHRC, including Abdolfattah Soltani, Mohammad Ali Dadkhah, and Mohammad Seyfzadeh. Kian’s arrest also comes on the heels of a politically motivated campaign of targeting and harassment against Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani’s previous attorney, Mohammad Mostafaei. Mostafaei fled Iran when authorities issued a warrant for his arrest last July in retaliation for comments he made to the international media in support of his client. He currently resides in Norway, where he has been granted political asylum.

IHRDC's recently published report entitled *Silencing the Women's Rights Movement in Iran* documents the arrests and detentions of lawyers who defend political prisoners and women—including Shadi Sadr, Forough Mirzaei, and Maryam Ghanbari—following the disputed presidential election of last year.

The report is available in English on IHRDC's website at:

<http://www.iranhrdc.org/httpdocs/English/pdfs/Reports/Women's%20Rights.pdf>.

The Persian translation of the report is available here:

<http://iranhrdc.org/httpdocs/Persian/pdfs/Reports/Silencing%20the%20Women%27s%20Right%20Movement%20-%20PERSIAN%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

IHRDC is a nonprofit organization based in New Haven, Connecticut that was founded in 2004 by a group of human rights scholars, activists, and historians. Its staff of human rights lawyers and researchers produce comprehensive and detailed reports on the human rights situation in Iran since the 1979 revolution. The Center's goal is to encourage an informed dialogue among scholars and the general public in both Iran and abroad. The human rights reports and a database of documents relating to human rights in Iran are available to the public for research and educational purposes on the Center's website.