

PRESS RELEASE - THE OBSERVATORY

IRAN: The Observatory strongly condemns ongoing judicial harassment of Ms. Nargess Mohammadi

Paris-Geneva, July 10, 2015. *The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), expresses its grave concerns regarding the pressures exerted on the arbitrarily imprisoned human rights defender Ms. Nargess Mohammadi in Iran.*

Ms. **Nargess Mohammadi**, Spokesperson and Vice-President of the Defenders of Human Rights Centre (DHRC), who was arbitrarily arrested on May 5, 2015¹ is now facing further criminal charges and judicial harassment while in prison. The Observatory recalls that Ms. Mohammadi was allegedly arrested in order to serve the remainder of a 6-year prison sentence she had commenced serving between April 21, 2012, and July 31, 2012, when she was released on bail for medical reasons.

According to the information received, the Iranian authorities had scheduled a hearing for Ms. Mohammadi on July 6, 2015, before Branch 15 of the Islamic Revolution Court of Tehran. The Ministry of Intelligence had reportedly requested the judge to issue the maximum punishment against her for the charges presented against her during a May 3, 2015 hearing, including “assembly and collusion against national security” and “spreading propaganda against the State.”² However, this hearing did not take place, and the authorities did not provide any explanation nor confirmation of whether or not it would be rescheduled.

In addition, Ms. Mohammadi continues to face infringements to her rights while in prison. On July 6, 2015, an open letter written by Ms. Mohammadi from Evin prison to the Tehran prosecutor was published on the Internet under the heading: “*Will telephone communications of women prisoners with their children harm national security?*” In this letter, she complained that she was unable to contact her 9-year-old twins because the prosecutor had banned all prisoners of the Women’s Ward in Evin prison from making telephone calls, despite the fact that 14 of the 22 prisoners concerned are mothers, and five have children under the age of 10.

Furthermore, prison officials have refused Ms. Mohammadi access to medicines prescribed by specialists before her imprisonment in order to treat her lung condition.

The Observatory is highly concerned about the ongoing judicial harassment and violations of human rights against Ms. Mohammadi, which appear to be aimed at punishing her and her family for her activities promoting human rights.

The Observatory requests that the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention intervene in Ms. Mohammadi’s case, and urges the Iranian authorities to release her immediately and unconditionally, and to guarantee in all circumstances her physical and psychological integrity and that of all human rights defenders in Iran. The Observatory more generally urges the Iranian authorities to put an end to all harassment - including at the judicial level - against all human rights defenders in Iran.

Background information

¹ See Observatory press release of May 5, 2015.

² Ibid.



For several years now, Ms. Mohammadi has been facing continuous judicial harassment related to her human rights work, including repeated summons, interrogations and trials.

On March 8, 2014, Ms. Mohammadi met the then High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy, Ms. Catherine Ashton, at the Austrian Embassy during an official visit by Ms. Ashton to Tehran. Following this meeting, the Iranian authorities banned Ms. Mohammadi from travelling abroad, and she has been repeatedly interrogated by State security agents regarding her discussions with Ms. Ashton about the suppression of the civil society and the conditions of political prisoners in Iran. Since March 2014, she has received 10 summons and has been detained twice by security agents for several hours each time.

On June 1, 2014 she was summoned to the Prosecutor's Office of the Islamic Revolution Court, where she was accused of "disturbing public opinion" and "assembly and collusion against national security" with reference to her participation in various activities, including meetings in which participants criticised the government's "Citizenship Charter" and discussed "International Women's Day" and "the Day of Clean Air".

In November 2014, the Observatory expressed fears that Ms. Mohammadi may be re-arrested on fabricated charges³.

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (OBS) was created in 1997 by FIDH and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT). The objective of this programme is to intervene to prevent or remedy situations of repression against human rights defenders.

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³ See Observatory press release of November 7, 2014.