

PRESS RELEASE - THE OBSERVATORY

IRAN: The Observatory strongly condemns arbitrary arrest of Ms. Nargess Mohammadi

Paris-Geneva, May 5, 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), strongly condemns today's arrest of human rights defender Ms. Nargess Mohammadi in Iran.*

Ms. **Nargess Mohammadi**, Spokesperson and Vice-President of the Defenders of Human Rights Centre (DHRC), was arrested in the early morning of May 5, 2015, when state security agents showed up at her home and threatened to break in. Upon her arrest, the agents claimed that she was being taken “to serve her prison sentence”. The Observatory recalls that Ms. Mohammadi started to serve a 6-year prison sentence on April 21, 2012¹, but that she was released on bail on July 31, 2012 for medical reasons.

On May 3, 2015, Ms. Mohammadi attended the first hearing of her trial at Branch 15 of the Islamic Revolution Court. After the prosecutor read out the indictment against her, the trial was rescheduled for a later date to allow her lawyers to read the file the prosecution had built against her. After the hearing, Ms. Mohammadi reported that this indictment contained three main charges against her:

- “assembly and collusion against the national security” based on her activities in the DHRC and cooperation with “the [Nobel Laureate] Shirin Ebadi, counter-revolutionary and feminist groups”;
- “spreading propaganda against the State” based on her “interviews with foreign and counter-revolutionary media participation in illegal gatherings, supporting sedition and anti-security inmates”; and
- “membership of the illegal and anti-security LEGAM group²”.

For several years now, Ms. Mohammadi has been facing continuous judicial harassment related to her human rights work, including repeated summoning, 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 the 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 the public opinion” and “assembly and collusion against the national security” with reference to her participation in various activities, including meetings where 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.

¹ See Observatory press release of April 23, 2012.

² The LEGAM group is a campaign for a step-by-step abolition of the death penalty, established by several human rights defenders and activists including the human rights lawyer Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh.

³ See Observatory press release of November 7, 2014.



The Observatory
for the Protection
of Human Rights Defenders

The Observatory expresses its deepest concern about today's arbitrary arrest of Ms. Nargess Mohammadi and about the ongoing judicial harassment against her, which appears aimed at sanctioning her human rights activities.

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 acts of harassment - including at the judicial level - against all human rights defenders in Iran.

For further information, please contact:

- **FIDH: Arthur Manet / Lucie Kroening: + 33 1 43 55 25 18**
- **OMCT: Miguel Martin Zumalacarregui: + 41 (0) 22 809 49 24**