

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Ref.: AL IRN 5/2026

(Please use this reference in your reply)

29 April 2026

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers and Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 52/4, 60/8, 54/14, 53/12 and 58/21.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning **the arrest and enforced disappearance of lawyer and human rights defender Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh, and the enforced disappearance for eight days of human rights defender Mr. Ahmadreza Haeri as well as the renewed sentences against him while in prison on the same charges.**

Ms. **Nasrin Sotoudeh** is a lawyer and a prominent human rights defender, who through her legal career defended women's rights activists, opposition activists and young prisoners. She has been awarded the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 2012 and received the international Rights Livelihood Award in 2020.

Mr. **Ahmadreza Haeri** is a human rights defender and an anti-death penalty campaigner, working to shed light on the situation of prisoners on death row and to raise awareness about executions in Iran.

Ms. Sotoudeh has been the subject of several communications by Special Procedures mandate holders to your Excellency's Government, most recently [IRN 20/2023](#), [IRN 16/2021](#), [IRN 14/2021](#), [IRN 12/2021](#), [IRN 21/2020](#), [IRN 6/2020](#), [IRN 11/2018](#) and [IRN 10/2018](#). We thank your Excellency's Government for their reply to IRN 20/2023, IRN 16/2021, IRN 14/2021 and IRN 21/2020. We regret not receiving a reply to the other communications. We are now concerned about Ms. Sotoudeh's recent arrest and enforced disappearance.

In its opinion 21/2011, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention determined that the deprivation of liberty of Ms. Sotoudeh was arbitrary in violation of articles 9, 10, 19, 20 and 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and articles 9, 14, 19, 21 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and fell into categories II and III of the categories applicable to the cases submitted to the Working Group.

According to the information received:

Regarding Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh

On 29 October 2023, Ms. Sotoudeh was arrested while attending the funeral of an Iranian teenager who died after being beaten by morality police for not wearing a hijab headscarf on the Tehran metro. Ms. Sotoudeh was severely beaten during her arrest by plainclothes officers and was taken to Evin Prison.

On 15 November 2023, Ms. Sotoudeh was released on bail. She remained on unofficial medical furlough until the time of her last arrest in 2026.

In July 2024, Ms. Sotoudeh was sentenced to eight years in prison by the Tehran Revolutionary Court on charges of “assembly and collusion against national security,” and for disregarding the mandatory veiling laws. There is no indication that she has appealed the decision.

On 1 April 2026, Ms. Sotoudeh was arrested from her home by agents of the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and taken to an unknown location. She was able to speak to her family on 18 April 2026. It is understood that she is being held by the Ministry of Intelligence; however, her exact location remains unknown. The reasons for her arrest and information on any charges against her were not provided. Ms. Sotoudeh suffers from poor health. Her current fate and whereabouts remain unknown.

Regarding Mr. Ahmadreza Haeri

In October 2022, Mr. Haeri was sentenced to three years on the charge of “gathering and collusion with the intention of acting against national security” and eight months in prison on the charge of “propaganda against the State.” The sentence was confirmed by the Tehran Revolutionary Court of Appeal.

In May 2023, Mr. Haeri began serving his sentence in Evin prison.

On 17 June 2023, the Tehran Criminal Court II sentenced the human rights defender to an additional 91 days in prison on the charge of “spreading disinformation”.

In September 2023, Mr. Haeri was transferred to Qezel Hesar Prison in Karaj province, where he is currently held.

On 16 October 2024, Mr. Haeri faced new charges of “propaganda against the State” and “spreading disinformation” in relation to his participation in a weekly protest inside the prison against executions in Iran and in defence of the political prisoners on death row. The activity is known as the “Tuesdays No-to-Execution” campaign.

On 12 November 2024, Mr. Haeri’s sentence was increased by the Tehran Revolutionary Court to four years for “gathering and collusion with the intention of acting against national security,” one year for “propaganda against the State”,

and 15 months for “spreading disinformation.” According to Iran’s Islamic Penal Code, article 134 provides that if the offences are not more than three, only the most severe punishment will be executed.

On 30 March 2026, Mr. Haeri was placed in solitary confinement and remained in incommunicado detention for eight days, during which the facility in which he was deprived of liberty was not disclosed to his family and lawyer, which amounts to a short-term enforced disappearance. This occurred after he participated with other prisoners in a protest against recent executions that had taken place in Iran. They were reportedly beaten and placed in isolation.

On 7 April 2026, Mr. Haeri was taken out of solitary confinement and returned to his usual location in the Qezel Hesar Prison. His family and lawyer only found out that he was held in isolation in the same facility after he was returned. He continues to face restrictions and is allowed only one phone call per week instead of daily calls. In 2025, he was denied eye examination for new glasses by specialists outside the prison for around seven months.

Without wishing to prejudge the accuracy of the information received, we express serious concern at the enforced disappearance of Ms. Sotoudeh since her arrest on 1 April 2026 and the lack of information regarding her current fate and whereabouts and the legal basis of her arrest. We are concerned that her deprivation of liberty, as well as preceding sanctions may have been taken in retaliation for her human rights work. We are also concerned at the repeated sentencing of Mr. Haeri on similar charges while in prison and believe this might also be in relation to his defence of human rights. We are equally concerned by what amounts to an enforced disappearance of Mr. Haeri for the duration of eight days, during which the reason for his transfer from his cell in prison and his new location were not disclosed.

We would like to emphasize that the prohibition of enforced disappearance and the corresponding obligation to investigate them has attained the status of *jus cogens* under international law from which no derogation is permitted, regardless of contexts of internal political instability or any other public emergency (Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 36, paragraph 2). Moreover, we recall that, in order to constitute an enforced disappearance, a deprivation of liberty must be followed by a refusal to acknowledge such deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which place such a person outside the protection of the law, regardless of the duration of the said deprivation of liberty or concealment.

Further, we wish to underscore that any judicial proceeding shall comply with the due process and fair trial guarantees required by international law. These include the right to be promptly informed about the charges, access to family, the right to be represented by legal counsel and to be brought before a judicial officer promptly after detention.

In addition, the repeat of charges for which Mr. Haeri was already serving a sentence involves apparent violations of the principle of *non bis in idem* under article 14(7) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by your Excellency’s Government on 24 June 1975, which guarantees that

individuals may not be tried or punished twice for the same act in respect of which they have already been finally convicted or acquitted.

Should the allegations be confirmed, they would be in contravention of the rights of every individual to life, health, physical integrity; freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatments or punishment, and of arbitrary deprivation of liberty; and the right to equal recognition before the law, as laid down, inter alia, in articles 3, 5, 6, 9, and 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), as well as articles 6, 7, 9, 10, 16, 19, and 20 read alone and in conjunction with article 2(3) of the ICCPR.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide detailed information on the current fate and whereabouts of Ms. Sotoudeh, including her place of deprivation of liberty, her state of health whether she can have contact with her family and lawyers, and whether she has been brought before a judge.
3. Please provide information on the factual and legal grounds for the arrest of Ms. Sotoudeh and her deprivation of liberty, as well as on the charges she is facing, if any.
4. Please provide detailed information on the transfer of Mr. Haeri to solitary confinement, and how this measure is in compliance with international human rights law. Please provide detailed information on the state of health of Mr. Haeri and on how his human rights in prison are ensured.
5. Please indicate what measures have been taken to ensure that Ms. Sotoudeh, Mr. Haeri and other human rights defenders and civil society organisations in Iran are able to carry out their peaceful and legitimate work in a safe and enabling environment without fear of threats or acts of intimidation and harassment of any kind.

We would like to inform your Excellency's Government that, after having transmitted the new information contained in the present communication to the Government, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention may also transmit the cases through its regular procedure in order to render an opinion on whether the deprivation of liberty was arbitrary or not. The present communication in no way prejudices any opinion the Working Group may render. The Government is required to respond separately to the allegation letter and the regular procedure.

We would also like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government that should sources submit the allegations concerning individual cases of enforced disappearances for the consideration of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances under its humanitarian procedure, the case will be examined by the Working Group according to its methods of work, in which case your Excellency's Government will be informed by separate correspondence.

This communication, and any response received from your Excellency's Government, will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) at the 60 days mark. Should Your Excellency's Government respond within 60 days, both the communication and the response, may be published before the 60 days mark. The communications and responses will also be made available in the subsequent periodic report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to prevent any irreparable harm to the life and personal integrity of Ms. Sotoudeh and Mr. Haeri, halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Mary Lawlor
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Ganna Yudkivska
Vice-Chair on Communications of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

Gabriella Citroni
Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances

Margaret Satterthwaite
Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers

Mai Sato
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to remind your Excellency's government of its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by your Excellency's Government on 24 June 1975, the United Nations Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances, and the UN Body of Principles for the Protection of Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment.

We remind that the prohibition of arbitrary deprivation of life, torture, and enforced disappearance are *jus cogens* norms, from which no derogation is permitted, regardless of contexts of armed conflict or any other public emergency. The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a State party to the ICCPR, is required to undertake all necessary measures to prevent arbitrary deprivation of life by law enforcement officials.

Enforced disappearance amounts to violations of articles 6, 7, 9 and 16 of the ICCPR, read alone and in conjunction with article 2(3) with regards to the disappeared. Moreover, it entails a violation of article 7, read alone and in conjunction with article 2(3) of the ICCPR with regard to the relatives of the disappeared person. In this respect, we also make reference to general comment No. 36 (2018) on article 6 of the ICCPR, which states, inter alia, that extreme forms of arbitrary detention that are themselves life-threatening, in particular enforced disappearances, violate the right to personal liberty and personal security and are incompatible with the right to life (para. 57), and that enforced disappearance constitutes a unique and integrated series of acts and omissions representing a grave threat to life, and States parties must take adequate measures to prevent the enforced disappearance of individuals and conduct an effective and speedy inquiry to establish the fate and whereabouts of persons who may have been subject to enforced disappearance (para. 58).

In addition, we would like to remind your Excellency's Government that under article 9.1 of the ICCPR "[n]o one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law." Moreover, article 9.2 stipulates that the person must be informed, at the moment of the arrest, about the reasons for such deprivation of liberty; in addition, the information about the charges against the person should be provided without delay. According to article 9.3, anyone deprived of his or her liberty "shall be brought promptly before a judge or other officer authorized by law to exercise judicial power and shall be entitled to trial within a reasonable time or to release." Article 9.4 provides that "[a]nyone who is deprived of his liberty by arrest or detention shall be entitled to take proceedings before a court, in order that that court may decide without delay on the lawfulness of his detention and order his release if the detention is not lawful". Furthermore, article 10 states that, "all persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person".

We draw your Excellency's Government's attention to the United Nations Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances, which establishes that no State shall practice, permit or tolerate enforced disappearances. Notably, the absolute prohibition of enforced disappearances and the corresponding

obligation to investigate them and punish those responsible have attained the status of *jus cogens*. Moreover, the Declaration also proclaims that each State shall take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent and terminate acts of enforced disappearance in any territory under its jurisdiction. We wish to reiterate the joint statement of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances on so-called “short-term” enforced disappearances, which affirms that duration is not a constitutive element of enforced disappearance under international human rights law, therefore regardless of the duration of an enforced disappearance, it produces serious harm and consequences for the disappeared and their families, and also presents practical challenges as regards seeking protection as well as defence of their rights. We also wish to recall the Working Group’s General comment on women affected by enforced disappearances (A/HRC/WGEID/98/2), which highlights that gender perspective is crucial in explaining, understanding and dealing with unique disadvantages and obstacles that women face in the exercise of their human rights and the study on Enforced disappearance and economic, social and cultural rights (paras. 33-37) which highlights the chilling effect of the disappearance of human rights defender.

We also like to bring to your Excellency’s Government attention the legal and procedural safeguards against torture and ill-treatment including the right to legal counsel and to contact one’s family from the outset of arrest provided in the UN Body of Principles for the Protection of Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment (Body of Principles). According to the Body of Principles the “Communication of the detained or imprisoned person with the outside world, and in particular his family ... shall not be denied for more than a matter of days.” (principle 15). Notwithstanding, the right to immediately inform a person of his choice of the arrest (principle 16.1) and to further correspond with family “detained or imprisoned person shall have the right to be visited by and to correspond with, in particular, members of his family and shall be given adequate opportunity to communicate with the outside world.” (principle 19).

We also recall that the arrest or detention of an individual as punishment for the legitimate exercise of the rights guaranteed by the ICCPR – including the right to freedom of expression and opinion (art. 19), the right of peaceful assembly (art. 20), and the right to freedom of association (art. 21) – is arbitrary (see CCPR/C/GC/35, para. 17 and the jurisprudence of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention). In addition, as reiterated by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, a deprivation of liberty is arbitrary when it constitutes a violation of international law on the grounds of discrimination, including discrimination based on gender or political or other opinion.

Further, the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Mandela Rules), adopted unanimously by the UN General Assembly (A/RES/70/175), establish States’ responsibility to provide healthcare for prisoners (rules 24 to 35) and to particularly ensure continuity of treatment and care (rule 24. 2). They provide that prisoners shall have access to health services available in the country without discrimination on the grounds of their legal situation (principle 9). Rule 27 provides that prisoners requiring specialized treatment or surgery shall be transferred to specialized institutions or to civil hospitals. Rule 46 stresses that health-care personnel shall “pay particular attention to the health of prisoners held under any form of involuntary separation, including by visiting such prisoners on a daily basis and

providing prompt medical assistance and treatment at the request of such prisoners or prison staff”.

Finally, we would like to draw your Excellency's Government to the fundamental principles set forth in the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, also known as the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. In particular, we would like to refer to articles 1 and 2 of the Declaration which state that everyone has the right to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels and that each State has a prime responsibility and duty to protect, promote and implement all human rights and fundamental freedoms.