



European Council



European Commission

Brussels, 21. 12. 2020

Dear Sirs,

We are replying to your and your colleagues' message on behalf of President Von der Leyen and President Michel.

We would like to underline that the European Union is extremely concerned about Ms. Sotoudeh's conviction in March 2019 and the prison sentence imposed on her. We firmly believe that Ms. Sotoudeh's arrest and conviction are completely incompatible with the nature of her work as a lawyer and her human rights work, including her attempts to prevent the execution of young offenders and her work in favor of women's equality. High Representative/Vice President Borrell raised this most recently during a public speech in the European Parliament on 7 October 2020. This followed earlier public calls, including by the High Representative/Vice-President's Spokesperson who had issued a statement on 13 March 2019 urging Iran to ensure that Ms. Sotoudeh and her husband, Reza Khandan, also threatened with a long sentence of imprisonment, could appeal their respective conditions.

Since Ms. Sotoudeh's arrest, senior EU officials have raised her case several times during bilateral contacts with Iranian authorities. We have asked that she be immediately released and that while in detention, she be allowed access to a lawyer of her own choosing and meetings with her family members. Furthermore, given concern regarding the possible spread of COVID-19 in Iranian prisons, as a result of the ongoing crisis, the European External Action Service continued to ask that at minimum, she be granted temporary release on a humanitarian basis. This was even more urgent when Ms. Sotoudeh was recently transferred to Karchak Prison, a decision which we strongly deplored.

Mr Vincent Asselineau, Chair  
Mr Alexis Anagnostakis, Human Right officer  
ECBA  
25 Bedford Row  
London - WC1R 4HD  
United Kingdom  
[secretariat@ecba.org](mailto:secretariat@ecba.org)

As you may be aware, on Sunday 8 November Ms. Sotoudeh was released from prison on medical furlough, a welcome development. The European Union will continue to urge that Ms Sotoudeh be granted full medical parole, including through the EU Member State representing the EU in Tehran, in the absence of an EU Delegation there. This will complement the efforts of our Member States and the European Parliament. We hope that through our collective efforts, Ms. Sotoudeh can be permanently released, reunited with her family and allowed to return to work as a lawyer.

Yours sincerely,

For the European Council

For the European Commission



Frédéric BERNARD



Bjoern SEIBERT