

STATEMENT ON NASRIN SOTOUDEH

We write on behalf of the Association of Middle East Women’s Studies (AMEWS), which is an organization of scholars and individuals with an interest in women and gender studies in the context of the Middle East/ North Africa and beyond, including transnational and diasporic communities in Europe as well as North and South America. AMEWS is affiliated with the Middle East Studies Association of North America, Inc. and works with academic networks around the world. Membership in AMEWS is open to anyone with an interest in Middle East/Muslim women and gender studies.

We are writing to express our grave concern with regards to the recent sentencing of the renowned Iranian woman rights activist and lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh to more than 4 decades in prison on March 11 2019. According to reports from leading human rights organizations, Ms. Sotoudeh was convicted and sentenced to 33 years in prison and 148 lashes. Her charges include “inciting corruption and prostitution”, “openly committing a sinful act by appearing in public without a hijab” and “disrupting public order: Ms. Sotoudeh is currently in custody at the notorious Evin Prison in Tehran. Ms. Sotoudeh is being punished gravely for her legal work defending women who face charges for peacefully protesting Iran’s compulsory hijab law, and for her criticism of the Iranian judicial procedures limiting defendants’ access to a lawyer in security-related cases, including those related to women’s rights.

As the world celebrates International Women History Day on March 8, The Human Rights Task Force of the Association for Middle East Women’s Studies (AMEWS) stands in full solidarity with the Ms. Sotoudeh and demands that she be granted access to a lawyer and given a fair trial. In particular, we are deeply troubled by the fact that Ms. Sotoudeh is being barred from seeing her family and that her safety inside Evin prison is not guaranteed. For many of us studying and following closely the situation of women’s rights in Iran, we are increasingly alarmed by the continuing targeting of women’s rights defenders and those who speak out against the Islamic republic record on women’s rights.

We have reasons to fear Nasrin’s safety as in Evin prison and we demand that she is given the full right to see her family and have access to her lawyers. We thus call upon the international community and the global academic community to exert pressure on the Iranian government to ensure the full legal rights of Nasrin. We also condemn the harsh sentence that was handed down against Nasrin in what was described by many as a grave miscarriage of justice. We call on the Iranian government to immediately revoke the sentence and drop all charges against Nasrin.

In solidarity,

The AMEWS Human Rights Task Force

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