



AMEWS

Association of Middle East Women's Studies

To: Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran
c/o H.E. Mr. Gholamali Khoshroo
Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
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To: His Excellency Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani

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To: The Honorable Dr. Hassan Rouhani

President of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Pasteur Street, Pasteur Square
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
c/o His Excellency Gholam Ali Khoshroo, the Iranian Amabassador to the UN iran@un.int

Your Excellency,

We are writing as the Human Rights Task Force of the Association for Middle East Women's Studies (AMEWS), which is affiliated with the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA). As the leading academic organization in the United States that speaks for women in the Middle East and/or women of Middle Eastern descent, we are undertaking a dialogue with you about the arrest and imprisonment of Dr. Homa Hoodfar. We in the Human Rights Task Force have been informed that Dr. Hoodfar was arrested on June 6, 2016 and is now detained in Evin prison in Tehran. It is the mandated responsibility of this Task Force to respond to academic freedom violations that affect Middle Eastern and/or Muslim women anywhere in the world. We have among our membership a number of colleagues of Dr. Hoodfar's who are scholars familiar with her work, many scholars of Iran, and a roster of the leading scholars of Middle Eastern women in the United States and in the Middle East (and our membership also includes a number of Europeans).

Dr. Homa Hoodfar, is a highly respected university professor and anthropologist at Concordia University, in Montreal, Canada, where she has lived for thirty years. She is an internationally renowned and widely published scholar who studies a range of issues related to the portrait of women in Middle Eastern societies. She is important to our scholarship and to the scholarship related to Iranian women.

From our information we have learned that Professor Hoodfar travelled to Iran in February of this year mainly to visit her family. She took the opportunity to do some archival research while she is there. However, shortly before she was to return home in March, she was arrested, but at that time was released on bail. She was called in a number of times for interrogation. When Professor Hoodfar was once again summoned for interrogation on June 6, she was imprisoned without due process.

We are puzzled about her arrest and imprisonment because Dr. Hoodfar's has not been involved in politics of any sort. We emphasize that she is an anthropologist who conducts ethnographic research across the

Middle East. Furthermore, her research is considered to be balanced. In a number of ways her studies can be said to have served Iran and other areas of the Middle East because she has written about the opportunities and high status that women have achieved in various Muslim countries, including in Iran. As an example, in one of her recent works she discusses women volunteer health workers in Iran's health system. In the report, *Health Workers and Health Knowledge as Avenues of Empowerment*, she stresses an example of women's empowerment in Iran. In fact, Dr. Hoodfar was among the pioneer scholars to highlight Muslim women's public roles. Her writings have made a major contribution to challenging the stereotypic portrayals of Muslim women as weak and removed from public life, scholarship that was so prominent in Western scholarship until recently.

The primary reason why we are writing you now is our deep concern for Dr. Hoodfar's health. As your doctors there in Iran can verify, she suffers from a serious chronic neurological condition that needs constant attention. Her health situation was further aggravated when last year she suffered a stroke. As you can imagine, Dr. Hoodfar is badly in need of the medical attention that only her regular doctors in Canada can give her. Because she is not being allowed to see her lawyer or contact her family, no one has been able to ensure she has the medication she needs for the neurological condition.

We are sincerely hoping that you will show compassion to Dr. Hoodfar in this holy month of Ramadan and provide her with immediate access to her family and lawyer who can supply her with the medication she needs. We trust the same compassion will encourage you to return her passport and other documents so that she can return to Canada.

Yours sincerely,

The Board of Directors, Association for Middle East Women's Studies (AMEWS)

The Human Rights Task Force of AMEWS

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