

# URGENT ACTION

## HEALTH CONCERN FOR CANADIAN-IRANIAN PROFESSOR

**The health of Canadian-Irish-Iranian citizen Homa Hoodfar, a 65-year-old prominent professor of anthropology, has deteriorated. Held in solitary confinement since 6 June, she has been denied access to specialized medical care for a neurological condition from which she suffers. It is feared the authorities have also withheld her medication.**

The health of Canadian-Irish-Iranian citizen **Dr Homa Hoodfar**, a prisoner of conscience and a professor of anthropology at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada, is deteriorating. She has been detained in solitary confinement in Tehran's Evin Prison since her arbitrary arrest on 6 June. She suffers from myasthenia gravis, a chronic autoimmune condition that affects the nerves and muscles and becomes worse under stressful conditions. Her family was only allowed to visit her in August, when they learned that she had been temporarily transferred to either the prison clinic or a hospital outside the prison around 8 August, as she was having severe difficulty swallowing (an advanced symptom of myasthenia gravis). The family has been unable to learn what kind of medical care she received and when she was returned to her cell. They were only allowed to meet with her for less than 10 minutes and in the presence of intelligence officials, which prevented her from communicating freely. They said she appeared disoriented, her hands were visibly shaking, and she had difficulty walking and talking.

Throughout her interrogations and detention, Homa Hoodfar has been denied the right to have the assistance of a lawyer. The judicial authorities have refused to share her court case with her lawyer and only told him verbally that she has been charged with "spreading propaganda against the system" and "collaborating with hostile governments". In July, they allowed her to have one brief meeting with her lawyer but denied her the right to communicate and consult with him in confidence as the meeting took place in the presence of intelligence officials. Since then, every attempt by her lawyer to visit her has been rejected, as were his numerous requests for bail. In August, the judicial authorities told the lawyer that he could not work on her case anymore. Her family subsequently appointed a second lawyer to represent her but he was similarly told that he could not take up her case. The family is now in the process of appointing a third lawyer. Her case has been sent to Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran for trial.

### **Please write immediately in English, Persian, Arabic, French and Spanish or your own language:**

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to release Homa Hoodfar immediately and unconditionally, as she is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of her rights to freedom of expression and association;
- Urging them to ensure that, pending her release, she is granted access to adequate specialized medical care outside prison and reminding them that depriving her of medical care could amount to torture and other ill-treatment;
- Urging them to ensure that she has regular access to a lawyer of her choice and to her family, including those living abroad, to guarantee the time and facilities to communicate and consult with her lawyer confidentially; and requesting them to allow her access to Canadian and Irish consular officials.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 OCTOBER 2016 TO:**

Office of the Supreme Leader  
Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Head of the Judiciary  
Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**And copies to:**  
President  
Hassan Rouhani

### **Please send your appeals to all the targets c/o diplomatic representatives accredited to the UK:**

H.E. Hamid Baeidinejad, Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran,  
16 PRINCES GATE LONDON SW7 1PT  
Tel: 02072254208 or 02072254209 Email: [iranconsulate.lon@mfa.gov.ir](mailto:iranconsulate.lon@mfa.gov.ir)

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 137/16. Further information:  
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE13/4257/2016/en/>

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 31 August, Iran's semi-official Fars News Agency published an article stating that the news about Homa Hoodfar's deteriorating health was false. The article quoted Homa Hoodfar's cousin in Iran saying: "The news...is false. Homa Hoodfar is in good health and is not in hospital... she is not in solitary confinement and... is in the general ward." Amnesty International is concerned that the authorities may have coerced her relative into making this false statement in an attempt to quell the outcry around her continued detention in solitary confinement. Up until the third week of August, all attempts by her family and lawyer to see her, including to give her personal items such as clothes and medication, were denied by officials. Homa Hoodfar's lawyer was subsequently allowed to take to Evin Prison the medication which had been shipped over by her family from Canada. Prison officials took the medication but it is unclear if they have begun administering it to her.

Homa Hoodfar is renowned for her decades of academic work on issues related to women's rights, sexuality, development and electoral politics and has written and co-authored several books, including *Between Marriage and the Market: Intimate Politics and Survival in Cairo (Comparative Studies on Muslim Societies)*, *Electoral Politics: Making Quotas Work for Women* and *Sexuality in Muslim Contexts: Restrictions and Resistance*. She has also been involved with an international feminist network called Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) and has worked on various WLUML projects which relate to advancing gender equality, justice and women's rights in Muslim contexts.

In a media interview on 24 June 2016, the Prosecutor General of Tehran stated that Homa Hoodfar's "criminal" case is in connection with "her entry into fields concerning feminism and national security offences". Days earlier, media outlets affiliated with the Revolutionary Guards ran articles claiming that she was "the Iran agent of a feminist network building operation". The articles also claimed that her work with WLUML to promote feminism and women's equality in Muslim countries and enhance women's bodily autonomy was aimed at "disrupting public order" and "prompting social-cultural changes that can ultimately pave the ground... for a soft overthrow". Homa Hoodfar's arrest and the national security charges brought against her is part of an intensified crackdown on women's rights activists in Iran. In the first half of this year, the authorities have heightened intimidation and harassment of women's rights activists and increasingly likened any collective initiative relating to feminism and women's rights to criminal activity. Since January 2016, more than a dozen women's rights activists in Tehran have been summoned for long, intensive interrogations by the Revolutionary Guards and threatened with imprisonment on national security-related charges. (For more information, see "Iran: Women's rights activists treated as 'enemies of the state' in renewed crackdown", 10 August 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/08/iran-womens-rights-activists-treated-as-enemies-of-the-state-in-renewed-crackdown/>).

Homa Hoodfar had travelled to Iran on 11 February 2016 both to visit her family and to conduct historical research on women's participation in elections since 1906. On the evening of 9 March 2016, the day before she was due to leave Iran, officers from the Intelligence Unit of the Revolutionary Guards raided her home and confiscated her personal belongings, including her three passports, mobile phone and computer. From the next day until she was arrested on 6 June, she was called repeatedly on her house phone by officials from the Revolutionary Guards and summoned for questioning. During these interrogations, in which she was not allowed to have a lawyer present, she was asked about her feminist beliefs, her work with WLUML, and her association with Iranian women's rights activists and human rights defenders. The interrogations were long and intense as the authorities had seized her computer and found access to years of email correspondence.

Further information on UA: 137/16 Index: MDE 13/4787/2016 Iran Issue Date: 15 September 2016