

NEW YORK CITY BAR

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February 9, 2012

Ambassador Mohammad Khazaee
Permanent Mission of the
Islamic Republic of Iran in the United Nations
622 Third Ave. New York, NY 10017

Dear Ambassador Khazaee:

The Association of the Bar of the City of New York is an independent professional organization of 23,000 members from New York and around the world. Our membership includes corporate attorneys, judges, prosecutors, government officials, and defense lawyers. Throughout its 141-year history, one of the principal purposes of the New York City Bar has been to promote the rule of law, both in the United States and around the world.

On many occasions in the past several years, the New York City Bar has, either on its own or in conjunction with other national and international bar associations, expressed its support for an independent judiciary and an independent legal profession, both which we believe are essential to the rule of law. We write now because we are increasingly concerned at the continuing incarceration of Mr. Abdolfattah Soltani, a prominent defense lawyer who was arrested on September 11, 2011.

Mr. Soltani was a co-founder of the Defenders of Human Rights Center along with four other lawyers, including Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Shirin Ebadi. An Amnesty International appeal calling upon Iran to immediately release Mr. Soltani stated that: "Mr. Abdolfattah Soltani was a senior member of the legal team representing the prisoners who face vague charges of threatening national security for teaching biology, engineering, architecture and other academic disciplines to young Baha'is denied university education because of their religion. Mr. Soltani was also imprisoned in 2006 and in 2009, when he represented Iran's seven Baha'i leaders who are currently serving harsh 20-year sentences for tending to the basic needs of the community, such as births, marriages and burials."

Mr. Soltani is not a Baha'i. However, he has defended Baha'is, as well as other human rights cases. In a report dated September 23, 2011, the U.N. Special Rapporteur for the situation of Human Rights in Iran, Mr. Ahmed Shaheed, reported that he received from Ms. Shirin Ebadi, a prominent human rights attorney and Nobel Laureate, a list of 42 attorneys "that have faced Government prosecution since 2009."

Ambassador Mohammad Khazae

The intimidation and harassment of a lawyer because of the identity of his clients is contrary to international standards set forth in the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, which the U.N. General Assembly adopted without dissent. Specifically, Article 16 of the Basic Principles provides that "Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; . . . and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics."

We therefore call upon Iran to reaffirm the rights afforded to Iranian lawyers under domestic and international law to practice their profession without governmental interference and, consistent with that right, to effect the immediate release of Mr. Soltani.

Very truly yours,



Samuel W. Seymour