



H.E Dr Amin Hossein Rahimi  
Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
Valiasr Ave  
Tehran  
Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: [info@justice.ir](mailto:info@justice.ir)

21 August 2024

**Re: Summons for the Reimprisonment of Mohammad Seifzadeh**

Your Excellency,

The Law Society of England and Wales, the Center for Human Rights in Iran, Lawyers for Lawyers, Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre and the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (see Annex 1) are gravely concerned about a summons being issued by the Iranian judiciary for the reimprisonment of Mr Mohammad Seifzadeh despite his ailing health. Mohammad Seifzadeh is a prominent human rights lawyer, a former judge, human rights activist and a co-founder of the Centre for the Defence of Human Rights in Iran.

We have been informed that 76-year-old Mr Seifzadeh has recently been summoned to Tehran's Evin Prison despite a severe heart ailment that has led to repeated hospitalisations. This summons relates to charges of "propaganda against the state" (Article 500 of the Islamic Penal Code) and "publishing falsehoods" (Article 698 of the Islamic Penal Code) for signing a joint letter by 45 Iranian activists calling on the United Nations Secretary-General to speak out against political executions and the repression of the "Women, Life, Freedom" protests.<sup>1</sup>

On 14 May 2023, Branch 29 of Tehran's Islamic Revolutionary Court sentenced Mr Seifzadeh to one year in prison on these charges. This sentence was subsequently upheld by Branch 26 of the Tehran Court of Appeals on 25 June 2023. Mr Seifzadeh refused to attend both trials, due to grave violations of his fair trial rights.<sup>2</sup>

Mr Seifzadeh has been subject to harassment, including arbitrary arrest, detention and prosecution for many years, because of his professional duties and defence of human

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<sup>1</sup> Iran Human Rights, Letter from 45 Iranian activists to the UN Secretary – General: Your Reaction Can Stop the Execution Machine, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5628/>.

<sup>2</sup> Iran Human Rights, Lawyer Mohammad Seifzadeh Sentenced to Prison for Letter to UN Secretary-General, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6079/>.

rights. He has been jailed 13 times in the last three decades and has consequently contracted and suffered from several diseases due to inhumane conditions and treatment in detention. Mr Seifzadeh reportedly suffered seven strokes during his last prison term, and at one point stopped breathing and could not feel his arms and legs. Despite warnings from doctors of a risk to life if he remained in prison, the Iranian authorities required him to serve his entire sentence.<sup>3</sup> Further, during his previous imprisonment, in Rajai Shahr (Gohardasht) Prison, Mr Seifzadeh also reports that he was not permitted shoes for exercise time, which resulted in long-term damage to his ankle.<sup>4</sup>

In October 2010, Mr Seifzadeh was sentenced to nine years imprisonment and a ten-year ban from practising as a lawyer on the charge of “acting against national security” for establishing the Centre for the Defence of Human Rights, which was shut down in Iran in 2008 five years after its founding. Two years later, he was sentenced to a further six years imprisonment on charges of “assembly and collusion against national security” for signing a joint statement in defence of Iranian people’s rights from inside prison.

Iran ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) on 24 June 1975 and has an obligation to respect and guarantee the rights established therein, including the right to life, right to a fair trial, the right to liberty and security of person, and the right to be free from torture and ill treatment. Article 10 of the ICCPR also requires that all persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.

According to Article 16 of the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, governments should “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”. Moreover, Article 23 of the Basic Principles states that: “Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the right to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights.”

The signing organisations respectfully urge the relevant authorities to:

- Drop all charges against Mr Mohammad Seifzadeh and ensure he is not subjected to further intimidation or harassment, including arbitrary arrest, detention and prosecution;
- Ensure that all individuals charged with offences are guaranteed fair trial rights pursuant to Iran’s international human rights obligations, and guarantee everyone’s right to effective access to justice;
- Release all lawyers in Iran who have been imprisoned due to their defence of human rights and their defence of detainees and political prisoners;
- Ensure that all lawyers in Iran can carry out their professional duties and exercise their right to freedom of expression and belief without intimidation, hindrance or improper interference.

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<sup>3</sup> Iran Human Rights, Lawyer Mohammad Seifzadeh Sentenced to Prison for Letter to UN Secretary-General, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6079/>.

<sup>4</sup> Iran Human Rights, Lawyer Mohammad Seifzadeh Sentenced to Prison for Letter to UN Secretary-General, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6079/>.

Yours sincerely,

The Law Society of England and Wales

The Center for Human Rights in Iran

Lawyers for Lawyers

Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre

International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute

cc:

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran

16 Princes Gate

London SW7 1PT, United Kingdom

Email: [info@iran-embassy.org.uk](mailto:info@iran-embassy.org.uk)

Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva

Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 28

1209 Geneva, Switzerland

Email: [missionofiran@gmail.com](mailto:missionofiran@gmail.com), [iran.unog@mfa.gov.ir](mailto:iran.unog@mfa.gov.ir)

Prof. Margaret Satterthwaite

UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers

OHCHR-UNOG, 8-14 Avenue de la Paix,

1211 Geneva 10 Switzerland

Email: [hrc-sr-independencejl@un.org](mailto:hrc-sr-independencejl@un.org)

British Embassy Tehran

172 Ferdowsi Avenue

Tehran

11316-99813

Iran

Email: [BritishEmbassyTehran@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:BritishEmbassyTehran@fcdo.gov.uk)

Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva

Avenue Louis Casati 58

1216 Cointrin

Geneva, Switzerland

Email: [geneva.un@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:geneva.un@fcdo.gov.uk)

## Annex 1

**The Law Society of England and Wales** (the “Law Society”) is the professional body representing more than 200,000 solicitors in England and Wales. Its concerns include upholding the independence of the legal profession, the rule of law and human rights throughout the world. The Law Society holds special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations since 2014.

**The Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI)** is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organisation working to protect and promote human rights in Iran. Headquartered in New York, CHRI is comprised of award-winning journalists, researchers, lawyers, activists, writers, multimedia specialists and advocates based around the world who work to support the basic rights and freedoms of the Iranian people.

**Lawyers for Lawyers (L4L)** is an independent, non-political and not-for-profit lawyers’ organisation. Its mission is to promote the independent functioning of lawyers and the legal profession across the world by supporting lawyers who are at risk as a result of discharging their professional duties. L4L was granted special consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council in July 2013.

**Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC)** is a non-profit organization dedicated to documenting human rights abuses in Iran. Founded in 2005 by Iranian lawyers and scholars, IHRDC has published dozens of in-depth reports on various human rights violations in Iran. Having obtained ECOSOC consultative status with the UN Social and Economic Council in 2018, IHRDC advocates for human rights in Iran at the Human Rights Council and engages with UN mechanisms for this purpose.

**The International Bar Association’s Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)**, established in 1995 under the honorary presidency of the late Nelson Mandela, works with the global legal community to promote and protect human rights and the independence of the legal profession worldwide. The IBAHRI is a substantively autonomous entity within the International Bar Association, the world’s leading organisation of international legal practitioners, bar associations and law societies, with over 80,000 individual lawyers, and 190 bar associations and law societies across more than 160 countries. Under the IBAHRI’s By-Laws, the Institute is governed by an independent Council and is under the Directorship of Baroness Helena Kennedy LT KC.