

**PRESS RELEASE - THE OBSERVATORY**

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**Iran: Prominent human rights defender Narges Mohammadi released from prison**

**Paris-Geneva, October 9, 2020 – Human rights defender Narges Mohammadi was released from Zanjan prison in the early hours of October 8, 2020, after her prison sentence was reduced. The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (FIDH-OMCT) welcomes this long-awaited release and calls on the Iranian authorities to release all other human rights defenders arbitrarily detained in the country.**

At approximately 3:00am on October 8, 2020, Ms. **Narges Mohammadi**, Spokesperson and Vice-President of the Iranian NGO Defenders of Human Rights Centre (DHRC), was released from Zanjan prison, Zanjan Province, after the reduction of her prison sentence. According to the Head of Zanjan Province Justice Department, Ms. Mohammadi benefited from the Law for Commuting Custodial Prison Sentences, passed in May 2020 that reduced her sentence from 10 to eight and a half years in prison.

**“We are relieved to learn about the release of Narges Mohammadi, especially amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been spreading in Iranian prisons and has threatened the lives of incarcerated human rights defenders”,** declared Alice Mogwe, FIDH President and Karim Lahidji, FIDH Honorary President.

Ms. Narges Mohammadi was arbitrarily arrested on May 5, 2015, to serve the remainder of a previous six-year prison term to which she had been sentenced in September 2011. On May 18, 2016, Branch 15 of the Islamic Revolution Court in Tehran found Ms. Mohammadi guilty of “assembly and collusion to commit crimes against national security”, “spreading propaganda against the system” and “establishing and running the illegal splinter group LEGAM”, a human rights group campaigning for the abolition of death penalty in Iran, under Article 498 of the Islamic Penal Code, and sentenced her to five years, one year, and 10 years of prison, respectively, a total of 16 years in prison. This sentence was upheld on September 28, 2016, by Branch 36 of the Tehran Court of Appeals, which asserted that she had to serve the maximum sentence, i.e. 10 years, pursuant to Article 134 of the Islamic Penal Code. On February 22, 2020, judicial authorities communicated two sets of new charges in two cases against Ms. Mohammadi. If convicted, she could be sent to prison again. Ms. Mohammadi’s health deteriorated significantly during her detention due to her pre-existing medical condition as well as the systematic refusal of the authorities to provide her with adequate medical care. In addition, she experienced COVID-19 symptoms in June 2020, while she was in prison.

**“As a human rights defender, Narges Mohammadi should never have been detained in the first place. We call on the Iranian authorities to accelerate the release of all human rights defenders, including Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh, who has been detained for more than two years and is in very poor health”,** added Gerald Staberock, OMCT Secretary General.

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*The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (the Observatory) was created in 1997 by FIDH and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT). The objective of this programme is to intervene to prevent or remedy situations of repression against human rights*



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