

SUPPORT HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

From: The Honorable Dennis J. Kucinich

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SUPPORT HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN COSPONSOR A RESOLUTION CALLING ON THE IRANIAN GOVERNMENT TO RELEASE ALL PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

Dear Colleague,

This week, Iranian human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh won an important victory. Forty-nine days after she began a hunger strike demanding that travel restrictions against her daughter be reversed, the Iranian government finally gave in. While Nasrin's condition deteriorated immensely, her victory demonstrated that human rights abuses in Iran can be effectively challenged.

But Nasrin remains behind bars in Iran's notorious Evin prison. She was arrested in 2010 and was eventually sentenced to six years in jail because of her work defending the likes of Noble Peace Prize Laureate Shirin Ebadi and other Iranian human rights advocates in court.

Now, Nasrin is the public face of the hundreds of Iranian prisoners of conscience languishing in the country.

Congress should support an effective approach to supporting human rights in Iran, and there are a number of ways to do this. Escalation of the confrontation between the U.S. and Iran is not one of them. In fact, many of those same defenders, such as Ebadi, as well as imprisoned opposition leaders Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, have warned that threats of war and increasing sanctions are only undermining the human rights situation.

Instead, the United States should be spotlighting the cases of prisoners of conscience publicly, supporting multilateral mechanisms for accountability, and supporting diplomacy as the best tool to raise human rights issues directly with Iran.

Please join me in supporting a resolution that embraces this approach. My resolution calls on the Iranian government to unconditionally release Nasrin Sotoudeh and all prisoners of conscience in Iran. It also urges President Obama to utilize direct diplomacy with Iran to support human rights, and to work with the Secretary of State to support the establishment of multilateral mechanisms to advance human rights in Iran. And finally, it commends the people of Iran who have bravely and peacefully exercised their fundamental human rights.

Sincerely, /s/ Dennis Kucinich Member of Congress