

June 12, 2016

The Honorable Dr. Hassan Rouhani
President of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Pasteur Street, Pasteur Square
Tehran,
Islamic Republic of Iran
c/o His Excellency Gholam Ali Khoshroo, the Iranian Ambassador to the UN iran@un.int

SUBJECT: Dr. Homa Hoodfar

Your Excellency,

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES), the oldest organization representing the global community of anthropologists, I write to express our deep concern over the troubling arrest and imprisonment of Dr. Homa Hoodfar, Professor Emerita of Anthropology at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. Professor Hoodfar is a Canadian of Iranian descent who is an internationally-respected scholar specializing in Middle East Studies. She has done research on gender and development throughout the region, including in Egypt, Pakistan and Afghanistan. She has also investigated Muslim immigrants in Canada. Her scholarship has promoted a greater understanding of Islam in the West and throughout the world. She has published extensively on reproductive health, the cultural and religious significance of *hijab*, and women's participation in politics and sports. She has a reputation for being a committed researcher who, while being an advocate for women's equality, is not a political activist. This is an important point that her niece Amanda Ghahremani was quoted to have emphasized in an interview for a recent *Global News* article. According to Ms. Ghahremani, the principal purpose of Dr. Hoodfar's visit to Iran was personal rather than professional. Beyond beginning some archival research for a historical project, she returned to spend time with relatives and friends after having suffered the loss of her husband last year and experienced a serious health crisis of her own. She also recently retired from her full-time academic position. Her visit to her beloved home country happened to coincide with recent elections that resulted in seventeen women winning seats in Parliament. This coincidence may have led to the presumption that she was in Iran to research women in electoral politics.

Based on what my colleagues and I have been reading in major international news sources and in alerts from Amnesty International, which has designated Dr. Hoodfar as a prisoner of conscience, we wish to join the mass calls for release being galvanized by Concordia University faculty members and professional associations such as the Canadian Anthropological Society/*La Société Canadienne d'Anthropologie*, and the American Anthropological Association. We are part of a growing campaign that opposes the unjust treatment to which Dr. Hoodfar is being subjected. She was wrongfully arrested without being charged of any offense. Following her first arrest on March 10, right before she was planning to leave the country, she was released on bail after being interrogated and having her passports, computer, and iPad confiscated. She was arrested a second time on June 6 and imprisoned in the notorious Evin Prison. We understand that she is being denied access to legal counsel and is not allowed to communicate with her relatives, who worry about her health now that she does not have the daily medication prescribed for managing her chronic neurological condition—one that if left untreated could be life-threatening.

The IUAES Executive Committee strongly urges you to exercise your authority to redress the unjust persecution of our colleague. Her professional interests and dual citizenship—a status that may not be recognized in Iran—might have led to a gross misunderstanding of the purpose of her sojourn in Iran. In light of what is conveyed in this letter and in the stream of communiqués you are receiving from all over the world, we request that Dr. Hoodfar be released from prison unconditionally and given her passport and other belongings. We are hoping for a resolution that favors her well-being, in terms of both her health and her human rights.

Sincerely,



Faye V. Harrison, Ph.D
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