IRAN ROOYAN

TELLING STORIES • RAISING VOICES • TRANSFORMING SOCIETY

Nasrin Sotoudeh, an attorney and a women's rights activist, was convicted of the crimes of spreading propaganda against the regime, acting against the security of the country, and membership in the Center for the Defenders of Human Rights. She was sentenced to eleven years imprisonment, twenty year prohibition from practice of law for twenty, and twenty year travel ban. After spending nine months of her eleven year prison term in Evin prison Nasrin has written a letter to her son Nima. Because of lack of access to paper, Nasrin wrote this letter on prison napkins.

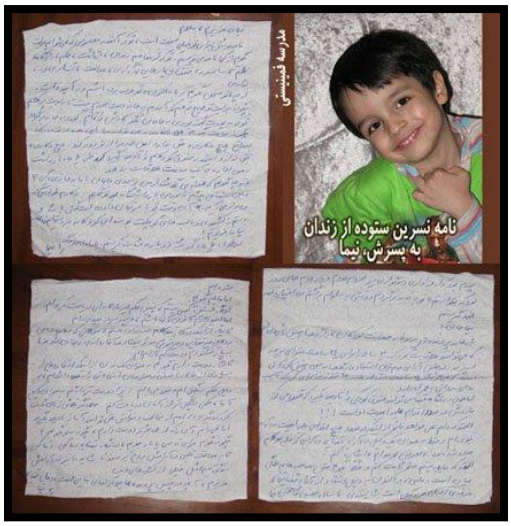
Translation by: Iran Rooyan

Nasrin Sotoudeh's letter to her son Nima

My dear Nima,

It is very difficult for me to write to you. You are so innocent and it is difficult for me to reach out to you from this place. You do not know of such things as prison, arrest, judgment, court, oppression, censorship, freedom, justice, equality.

How can I express my thoughts to this small child that you are with the hope that you can understand? How I long to take flight into your arms, but how can I explain to you that my return home is not in my hands. I know that you asked your father to tell me to hurry up and finish my work and come home. How can I tell you that no work is important enough to keep me away from you this long. In reality no work is worthy enough to keep me away from you for this long. No work should ignore and dismiss the rights of my children to such an extent that during the past six months prohibit me from visiting you even for one hour.



How should I answer your question of "Mamon, will you come back home with us?" While in front of my guards, I had to say to you "my work is taking longer and I will return later." You nodded your head and said alright, and then you pulled my hands to your small lips and kissed them.

My dearest Nima!

Over the past six months twice I broke down in tears. The first time was when my father passed away and I was not able to participate in his funeral and memorial service and I was not able to grieve with my family. The second time was when I was not able to return home with you. On that day, upon returning to my cell my tears poured down my face and I simply could not stop them.

My dearest Nima!

Repeatedly, in child custody cases, the Iranian courts have ruled that a three year old child may not be kept with his or her father for 24 consecutive hours and be deprived of the presence of his or her mother for that length of time. The rational of the courts is that children of such young age will suffer emotionally and psychologically if they are kept away from their mother for that length of time. However, this very same judicial system can and does deprive a child of such a right when his mother is alleged to be a security threat to the government. Of course I do not wish to speak with you of such matters, and I do not want to have to tell you that all I have done is represent my clients in pursuit of their rights. Of course I do not want to have to prove to you that all I have spoken about has been a criticism of our judicial process, which is the right of any attorney, and for such statements I have been deemed worthy of an eleven year prison sentence.

To begin with, I am not the first to receive such an unjust verdict, but I hope that I am one of the last. Nonetheless I fear that I will not be. Second, I am solaced with the knowledge that I am in prison with those whom I attempted to save, those whom my defense of their rights fell upon deaf ears. Third, I would like to say that as a woman I am indeed proud to be given such a sentence for my efforts to defend so many civil society activist and election protestors, and I am pleased to receive a heavier sentence for defending them. And now, the activism and mobilization of women has proven that those who agree or disagree with us cannot dismiss or disregard us.

I don't know how to tell you the one thing I long to tell you? I do not know how to ask you to pray for my judge, my prosecutor, or this entire system. I do not know how to ask you to pray so that they reach justice in their hearts and peace in their soul, so that maybe we can live in peace, like many other countries. My dearest, the

ultimate victory is in no way reached with the best of defenses, it is reached with the purity and innocence of all those whose rights and freedoms have been trampled upon. It is that innocence that is the ultimate victor. It is for that reason that I call on your childhood innocence to pray for the freedom of all prisoners and not just the political prisoners.

In hopes of better days,

Maman Nasrin
February 2011