



For Immediate Release

April 25, 2013

## Public Statement

### **The Law Society of Upper Canada Expresses Grave Concerns about the Harassment, Arrest and Imprisonment of Human Rights Lawyers and Activists in Iran**

**Toronto** – The Law Society of Upper Canada condemns the persecution of human rights lawyers and activists in Iran.

On October 29, 2010, Mr. Mohammad Seifzadeh was sentenced to 9 years in prison and a 10-year ban on practising law by Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in Iran, on charges of “assembly and collusion against national security”. Mr. Seifzadeh is known for his human rights work with the Defenders of Human Rights Center (also known as the Center for the Defence of Human Rights) in Iran, which works to defend the rights of women, prisoners of conscience, political prisoners and minorities in Iran.

Reliable reports indicate that while Mr. Seifzadeh was appealing this decision, he was arrested and imprisoned in the North Western city of Urumiyeh and denied access to his lawyer. In September 2011, Mr. Seifzadeh was additionally charged with “propaganda against the state”, and on February 20, 2013, Mr. Seifzadeh received a new sentence of six years in prison. He remains detained in Evin prison in Tehran, in worsening medical condition.

The arrest of Mr. Seifzadeh is related to the systemic approach by Iranian officials to silence hundreds of activists and opposition members many of whom have been sentenced to prison or death. In the past, the Law Society of Upper Canada has repeatedly condemned the harassment of lawyers in Iran, including the treatment of Shirin Ebadi, Saleh Kamrani, Nasser Zarafshan, Nasrin Sotoudeh and Abdolfattah Soltani, by raising its concerns with the Iranian authorities about the ongoing human rights violations against lawyers.

International human rights instruments, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and the *United Nations Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary*, state that judicial independence and respect for human rights are essential to advancing the rule of law.

The Law Society urges the government of Iran to:

- a. take steps to ensure that lawyers and judges are not subjected to politically motivated sanctions as a result of their work;
- b. publicly recognize the importance, legitimacy and independence of the work of lawyers and judges;
- c. ensure that all lawyers and judges can carry out their peaceful and legitimate duties and activities without fear of removal from office; and

- d. ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with human rights standards.

*The Law Society of Upper Canada is the governing body for some 44,600 lawyers and 5,200 paralegals in the Province of Ontario, Canada and the Treasurer is the head of the Law Society. The mandate of the Law Society is to govern the legal profession in the public interest by upholding the independence, integrity and honour of the legal profession for the purpose of advancing the cause of justice and the rule of law.*

*The Law Society urges the legal community to intervene in support of members of the legal profession in Iran in their effort to advance the respect of human rights and to promote the rule of law.*

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