

**On the occasion of International Women's Day
8 March 2008**

Women of Iran, we do not forget you!

To all Iranian women engaged in the fight for equality,

On International Women's Day, 8 March, as we reaffirm that women's rights are human rights, on behalf of FIDH and its member organizations around the world, I wish to express our solidarity with you, women of Iran who persevere in a daily struggle for equality and dignity.

Whilst repression against civil society movements generally has increased over the past years in Iran, we are aware that those fighting for women's rights are particular targets of this repression. Today we wish to reaffirm our support for the courageous combat that the women of Iran are leading.

We express our strongest support and admiration for the initiative you launched over a year and half ago: the Campaign for Equality, known worldwide as the "**One Million Signatures Campaign**" aimed at the abolition of discriminatory laws and raising general awareness on women's rights. Your movement is an example to all of us, for its peaceful action, its legitimate goals and its wide reach. We admire your persistence despite the risks, repression and the censure that you are undergoing. By uniting women and men, from diverse social backgrounds, you are succeeding in highlighting that women's rights concern all of us and that progress can only result from a collective movement.

We express our solidarity with all the women who, on the basis of their engagement in this campaign, have been arbitrarily arrested, detained, and convicted, on the basis that defending women's rights in Iran is today considered as a threat to State security. We express our particular support for Ronak Safarzadeh and Hana Abdi, arrested in October and November 2007 and arbitrarily detained since then, without any charge nor trial, for the mere peaceful exercise of their rights.

In the face of legislation denying women their most basic rights, you represent hope for all women in Iran. The hope that one day women in Iran will not have to fear daily arbitrariness and torture for having looked for a decent future. Your commitment is not forgotten. You are not forgotten. We, defenders of human rights, pay respect to the force of your convictions, your courage and your perseverance.

On this day, a day dedicated to you, we think of those women who, in the face of grave threats to their freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly, cannot publicly mark this symbolic occasion. We look forward to better days when International Women's Day will no longer be marked by acts of repression against women in Iran, but by the celebration of women's rights and equality.

Souhayr Belhassen, FIDH President