



13 June 2012

His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran
c/o H.E. Mr. Mohammad Khazaei
Ambassador of Iran to the United Nations
Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
622 Third Avenue, 34th Floor
New York, NY 10017, USA

Your Eminence, Grand Ayatollah Ali Hoseyni Khamene'i:

SPIE the International Society for Optics and Photonics, the European Optical Society, and the Optical Society (OSA), note with concern the recent sentencing of Mr. Omid Kokabee to ten years in prison and respectfully call upon the Iranian government to immediately overturn his sentence and allow him to return to his studies.

The international optics community is particularly concerned with the threat to scientific freedom and academic research that Mr. Kokabee's trial and imprisonment represent. On behalf of the optical scientists and engineers from the 170 countries represented by the international organizations listed below, we would like to remind the Iranian government that numerous international human rights bodies and protocols exist to protect an individual's freedom to learn and participate in scientific research including the United Nations Human Rights Council and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) which is part of the International Bill of Human Rights and the United Nations Human Rights Council.

The science research community is a global community that considers Iran an important member. We are concerned that Mr. Kokabee's treatment will discourage Iranian students and researchers from pursuing educational opportunities that could benefit their home country and the world at large. Additionally, this may lead to the exclusion of Iranian researchers from international collaboration and multi-national projects like the Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East (SESAME).

We believe that Mr. Kokabee's arrest and sentencing may have resulted from a misunderstanding of the scientific activities he was undertaking in his graduate research. Mr. Kokabee is a graduate of Sharif University of Technology in Tehran who later studied at Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya in Spain where he obtained a master's degree in photonics. He was most recently studying at the University of Texas where he was pursuing a PhD degree in optics. According to a widely publicized article in the highly respected publication Nature, Mr. Kokabee was arrested in Tehran in February 2011 on charges of "communicating with a hostile government" and "illegal earnings." It is our understanding Mr. Kokabee has no training in nuclear physics, is not politically active, is not associated with any political movement in Iran and has consistently denied all charges against him.

It is our hope that the Iranian government will act to quickly rectify this situation and overturn Mr. Kokabee's sentence so that he will be able to resume his studies.

Sincerely,

Dr. Eustace Dereniak
SPIE 2012 President

Dr. Lefèvre, Hervé
EOS 2012 President

Dr. Tony Heinz
OSA 2012 President

cc: Ahmed Shaheed, the United Nations Special Rapporteur the Situation of Human Rights in Iran