

United States Senate

March 7, 2013

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

I am writing to urge your immediate investigation into a March 6, 2013 report that Ms. Samira Ibrahim, an Egyptian national selected by the State Department to receive the Secretary of State's International Women of Courage Award, used her Twitter account to express anti-Semitic views and support for international terrorism.

According to the report in the *Weekly Standard*, on September 11, 2012, Ms. Ibrahim allegedly tweeted, "Today is the anniversary of 9/11. May every year come with America burning." On July 18, 2012, following a Hezbollah terrorist attack targeting Israeli tourists in Bulgaria, she allegedly tweeted that "[t]oday is a very sweet day with a lot of very sweet news." In other tweets, she allegedly called Saudi Arabia's ruling family "dirtier than the Jews" and praised Adolf Hitler. Ms. Ibrahim subsequently removed some of the tweets on March 6, 2013, claiming that her account has been hacked – a dubious claim given the timing and duration for which these tweets remained on her account.

If the *Weekly Standard* report is accurate, I urge you to immediately rescind the nomination of Samira Ibrahim and instead grant the award to a more deserving candidate, such as Nasrin Sotoudeh from Iran.

As noted in the Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011, Nasrin Sotoudeh is a "prominent human rights lawyer and women's rights activist." Ms. Sotoudeh has worked for years to promote freedom in Iran, including women's rights. She provided legal defense to those arrested for protesting during the Green Revolution in 2009 and despite threats from the Iranian regime to cease her work, she persisted in the fight for freedom of expression.

On September 7, 2010, Ms. Sotoudeh was arrested on trumped up charges of "acting against the national security" and was sentenced to six years in prison and a 10-year ban on practicing law. She is currently serving her sentence in Iran's notorious Evin prison. In October 2012, the European Union awarded her the prestigious Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought.

As stated on the State Department's website, the International Women of Courage Award "honors women around the globe who have exemplified exceptional courage and leadership in advocating for human rights, women's equality, and social progress, often at great personal risk." Based on this criteria, there is no more deserving candidate than Ms. Sotoudeh.

I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Kirk". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Kirk".

Mark Kirk
US Senator