

PUBLIC

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UA 207/08 Fear of torture or other ill-treatment

IRAN Zeynab Bayzeydi (f), women's rights activist

Women's rights activist Zeynab Bayzeydi was arrested on 9 July, after the police ordered her to present herself for interrogation at a police station in the city of Mahabad, in the western province of Kordestan. She is in danger of torture or other ill-treatment.

Zeynab Bayzeydi is a member of the Human Rights Organization of Kurdistan (HROK) and the One Million Signatures Campaign, which aims to collect a million signatures of Iranians on a petition demanding changes to laws that discriminate against women.

Her family only learned that she had been arrested some days later, when she was allowed to telephone them. She told them she had been summoned for several hours of interrogation on 5 July, after which she was told to return on 9 July. This time she was questioned for three hours and then arrested. She was held at a detention centre in Mahabad run by the Ministry of Information and Security. She was brought before a revolutionary court in Mahabad on 31 July, and charged with membership of unauthorised human rights associations, and on account of her activities in support of women's rights. She has denied all the charges. She is a prisoner of conscience who is being detained solely because of her peaceful exercise of her rights to freedom of expression and association.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The HROK, which has over 200 members, was founded in April 2005. The authorities have never granted it official recognition as an NGO. Its founder, Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand, is serving an 11-year prison sentence for "acting against state security by establishing the Human Rights Organization of Kurdistan" and "propaganda against the system."

Iran's Kurdish population live mainly in the west and north-west of the country, in Kordestan and neighbouring provinces, bordering Kurdish areas of Turkey and Iraq. They have long suffered extensive discrimination. Kurdish human rights defenders, including community activists and journalists, risk arbitrary arrest and torture.

Parents are banned from registering their babies with certain Kurdish names, and religious minorities that are mainly or partially Kurdish are targeted by measures designed to stigmatize and isolate them. Kurds are also discriminated against in their access to employment, adequate housing and political rights, and so suffer entrenched poverty, which has further marginalized them.

For more information on human rights violations against the Kurdish minority in Iran, see: *Iran: Human rights abuses against the Kurdish minority*, at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/088/2008/en/d140767b-5e45-11dd-a592-c739f9b70de8/mde130882008eng.pdf>

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Persian, Kurdish, or your own language:

- expressing concern about the arrest of Zeynab Bayzeydi and urging the authorities to ensure that she is not tortured or otherwise ill-treated, and has regular access to her family, legal counsel and any medical attention she may require;
- expressing concern that she is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of her rights to freedom of expression and association, and calling for her immediate and unconditional release.

APPEALS TO:

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi
Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh / Office of the Head of the Judiciary
Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave., south of Serah-e Jomhouri, Tehran 1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: info@dadgostary-tehran.ir (In the subject line write: **FAO Ayatollah Shahroudi**)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Governor of West Azerbaijan

His Excellency Dr. Rahim Ghorbani
PO Box: 775
Oromiyeh 57135
Islamic Republic of Iran

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

President

His Excellency Mahmoud Ahmadinejad
The Presidency
Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection
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Fax: + 98 21 6 649 5880

Email: dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir
via website: <http://www.president.ir/email/>

and to diplomatic representatives of Iran accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 12 September 2008.