

PUBLIC

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10 April 2008

UA 93/08 Arbitrary arrest/ Prisoner of conscience

IRAN Khadijeh Moghaddam (f), women's rights defender

Women's rights defender Khadijeh Moghaddam was arrested by security officials on 8 April at her home in Tehran. She has been accused of "spreading of propaganda against the state; disruption of public opinion; and actions against national security" and is held in Vozara detention centre in Tehran. Amnesty International believes she is a prisoner of conscience, held solely on account of her peaceful activities in support of equal rights for women in Iran.

Khadijeh Moghaddam is an active member of the Campaign for Equality, which aims to collect one million signatures of Iranians for a petition demanding an end to legal discrimination against women in Iran. She was arrested at her home at 11am when security officials forced their way into her house. She was shown the warrant for her arrest only after a lengthy argument. Khadijeh Moghaddam was taken to a base belonging to Iran's Revolutionary Guards known as Eshrat Abad, Tehran (also known as Prison 59), where she was interrogated for several hours about her involvement with the Campaign for Equality, before being brought before an investigative judge of the Tehran Revolutionary Court. The judge also interrogated her, charged her and set her bail at an amount approximately equivalent to US\$ 112,000.

Khadijeh Moghaddam's family and friends spoke with her while she waited to be transferred to the Vozara detention centre. She told them that she was arrested for hosting meetings of the Campaign for Equality in her home and that the investigative judge had asked her to identify seven or eight members of the Campaign who had participated in these gatherings. Later Khadijeh Moghaddam told the judge that she was unable to pay the bail. According to a statement issued by Campaign for Equality activists, the judge said that Khadijeh Moghaddam would be imprisoned for a week before being brought back before the Court for questioning, when she would have another opportunity to provide the names of the Campaign members and the bail amount. When she was asked to make a statement in her defence, Khadijeh Moghaddam stated: "...my way of life is my defence."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Dozens of activists and supporters have been arrested in connection with their activities for the Campaign for Equality, some while collecting signatures for the petition aiming to end legal discrimination against women in Iran. As of January 2008, the Campaign's website had been blocked by the authorities at least seven times (see: <http://www.change4equality.com>). Official permission to hold public meetings has frequently been denied, and Campaign activists usually hold their workshops in the homes of sympathizers, some of whom have then received threatening phone calls apparently from security officials or been summoned by them for interrogation. At least one such workshop was forcibly broken up by police, who arrested those present, beating some.

Two women, Ronak Safarzadeh and Hana Abdi, remain detained in the city of Sanandaj, Kordestan province (see UA 297/07, MDE 13/130/2007, 7 November 2007) because of their affiliation to the Campaign for Equality.

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

- expressing concern at the arrest of Khadijeh Moghaddam in connection with her peaceful activities in support of equal rights for women in Iran;
- urging the authorities to release her immediately and unconditionally since she is a prisoner of conscience;
- asking the authorities to ensure that while in detention she is granted immediate and regular access to her family and lawyer of her choice and that she is protected from any form of torture or ill-treatment.

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

Minister of Intelligence

Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejeie
Ministry of Intelligence, Second Negarestan Street, Pasdaran Avenue,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Salutation: Your Excellency

Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei, The Office of the Supreme Leader
Islamic Republic Street - Shahid Keshvar Doust Street
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: info@leader.ir

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

President

His Excellency Mahmoud Ahmadinejad
The Presidency
Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: + 98 21 6 649 5880

Email: via website: <http://www.president.ir/email/>

Director, Human Rights Headquarters of Iran

His Excellency Mohammad Javad Larijani
C/o Office of the Deputy for International Affairs
Ministry of Justice,
Ministry of Justice Building, Panzdah-Khordad (Ark) Square,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: + 98 21 5 537 8827 (please keep trying)

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 22 May 2008.