

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/155/2008

21 October 2008

UA 289/08 Arbitrary detention/ fear of torture or other ill-treatment

IRAN Esha Momeni (f), student

Esha Momeni, a student and women's rights defender, was arrested by Iranian security officials on 15 October. She is being held in Section 209 of Evin Prison in Tehran, which is run by the Ministry of Intelligence. She has not been charged with any offence, and is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Esha Momeni is a graduate student at California State University, Northridge, in the USA. She is also a member of a branch of the Campaign for Equality in California. She had been in Iran for two months to visit her family and to conduct research for her Master's degree thesis on the Iranian women's movement, for which she had conducted video interviews with members of the Campaign for Equality in Tehran.

Esha Momeni was arrested while driving on the Moddaress Highway in Tehran, by officials who identified themselves as traffic police. They told her that they were arresting her on suspicion of committing a traffic offence. They then escorted her to her family's home, which they searched, confiscating her computer and the footage of the interviews she had conducted. She was then taken to Section 209 of Evin Prison. Esha Momeni's family have not been allowed to visit her and were told by the arresting authorities that if they did not publicize her arrest, she would be released quickly. However, on 20 October, relatives visited a branch of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran to try and find out more about her situation. Officials told them that Esha Momeni's case was still being investigated, and no details would be released until the investigation was completed. Following this, her family allowed details of her arrest to be made public.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Campaign for Equality, launched in 2006, is an Iranian women's rights initiative composed of a network of women and men committed to ending discrimination against women in Iranian law. The Campaign gives volunteers basic legal training, and these volunteers travel around the country promoting the Campaign, talking with women in their homes, as well as in public places, telling them about their rights and the need for legal reform. The volunteers are also collecting one million signatures of Iranian nationals for a petition demanding an end to legal discrimination against women in Iran.

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 demanding an end to legal discrimination against women in Iran. As of October 2008, the Campaign's website had been blocked by the authorities at least 16 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), while a third woman, Zeynab Beyezidi is imprisoned in Mahabad in connection with their activities on behalf of the Campaign for Equality.

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

- expressing concern at the arrest of Esha Momeni, and urging on the authorities to treat her humanely in detention, and protect her from torture or other ill-treatment;
- asking the authorities to ensure that while in detention she is granted immediate and regular access to her family, a lawyer of her choice, and any medical treatment she may require;
- expressing concern that her arrest was apparently in connection with her peaceful activities in support of equal rights for women in Iran and in the context of her graduate research;
- urging the authorities to release her immediately and unconditionally if she is not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought to trial promptly and fairly;

APPEALS TO:

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi
Howzeh Riyasat-e Goveh 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
Howzeh Riyasat-e Goveh Qazaiyeh (Office of the Head of the Judiciary)
Pasteur St, Vali Asr Ave., south of Serah-e Jomhouri, Tehran 1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: +98 21 3390 4986 (there are problems with this line, please try three times)
Email: int_aff@judiciary.ir (In the subject line: **FAO Mohammad Javad Larijani**)

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 2 December 2008.