

# URGENT ACTION

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVIST DETAINED

**24-year-old student and women's rights activist Somayeh Rashidi has been detained in Evin prison since her arrest on 19 December 2009. Amnesty International believes she is being held because she campaigns for women's rights. She has been prevented from seeing her lawyers and her family.**

**Somayeh Rashidi** has been a member of the Campaign for Equality since its foundation in 2006. The Campaign for Equality, also known as the One Million Signatures Campaign, aims to end legal discrimination against women in Iranian law.

Somayeh Rashidi's house in Tehran was raided by security officials on 14 December 2009. They confiscated personal items, including her computer and hand-written notes. She was served with a summons to Branch 12 of the Revolutionary Court on 19 December 2009. She presented herself to the court with her lawyer, who was not permitted to attend the interrogation session. Afterwards, her lawyer was informed that Somayeh Rashidi had been arrested and taken to Evin Prison in Tehran.

Somayeh Rashidi has been denied any contact with her lawyers since she has been held. She has been permitted to speak on the phone to friends and family at least twice. However, her family, who live hundreds of miles away in the north-eastern city of Mashhad, were not permitted to visit her on 28 January, even though Somayeh Rashidi had told them in a phone call that she would be allowed a visit on that day.

Before her arrest, Somayeh Rashidi was banned from studying for a Masters degree in women's studies at the start of this academic year, apparently for her activities in the women's movement and on campus.

### **PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Persian, Arabic, English, French or your own language:**

- Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Somayeh Rashidi, who is held solely for her peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression and association in connection with her women's rights activities;
- In the meantime, urging the Iranian authorities to protect her from torture or other ill-treatment and to grant her immediate and regular access to her family, her lawyers and to any necessary medical treatment;
- Reminding the Iranian authorities that freedom of expression and association are guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Iran is a state party.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 19 MARCH 2010 TO:**

#### Head of the Provincial Judiciary in Tehran

Ali Reza Avaei  
Karimkhan Zand Avenue  
Sana'i Avenue, Corner of Alley 17, No. 152  
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran  
**Email:** [avaei@Dadgostary-tehran.ir](mailto:avaei@Dadgostary-tehran.ir)  
**Salutation:** Dear Mr Avaei

#### Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Sadeqh Larijani  
Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh  
(Office of the Head of the Judiciary)  
Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave., south of Serah-e Jomhuri, Tehran, 1316814737  
Islamic Republic of Iran  
**Email: Via website:**  
<http://www.dadiran.ir/tabid/75/Default.aspx?i rst starred box: your given name; second starred box: your family name; third: your email address>  
**Salutation:** Your Excellency

#### **And copies to:**

Director, Human Rights Headquarters  
Mohammad Javad Larijani  
Howzeh Riassat-e Ghoveh Ghazaiyeh  
Pasteur St, Vali Asr Ave., south of Serah-e Jomhuri  
Tehran 1316814737  
Islamic Republic of Iran  
**Fax:** +98 21 3390 4986  
**Email:** [bia.judi@yahoo.com](mailto:bia.judi@yahoo.com) (In subject line: **FAO Mohammad Javad Larijani**)  
**Salutation:** Dear Mr Larijan

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**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.** Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Somayeh Rashidi was detained previously for two days following demonstrations against the government which took place on 4 November 2009, the anniversary of the storming of the US Embassy in Tehran in 1979. Following a demonstration in Tehran in June 2006 which was violently repressed by security forces, she was banned from her studies for a term. When she tried to continue her education this year, she found she had a "star" on her record. This is a process used by the Iranian authorities to prevent students who engage in political or other activities from continuing their studies. An interview with Somayeh Rashidi can be read at <http://www.signforchange.info/english/spip.php?article368>, and a video of her talking about her work can also be seen at <http://www.signforchange.info/english/spip.php?article634>.

The Campaign for Equality, also known as the One Million Signatures Campaign, is a grassroots women's rights initiative, aimed at ending discrimination against women in Iranian law. It was launched in August 2006 with the aim of collecting a million signatures of Iranians calling for the reform of legislation which discriminates against women. Over 50 members of the Campaign have been detained for their activities on behalf of the Campaign. For example, Alieh Eghdam-Doust is currently serving a three-year prison sentence for her peaceful participation in a 2006 demonstration demanding equal rights for women. *Change for Equality*, the website of the Campaign, has been filtered by the Iranian authorities at least 21 times.

In August, in the first of a series of mass "show trials" of people arrested following the disputed presidential election held in June, the women's rights movement was named by the prosecution as being part of an alleged "velvet revolution" aimed at overthrowing the government in Iran. Noushin Ahmadi Khorassani and Parvin Ardalan, both prominent members of the Campaign for Equality, as well as Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Shirin Ebadi, who has supported the Campaign since its foundation, were all mentioned as leaders of sections of the women's movement, although they were not on trial.

In late October, activists from the Campaign for Equality started receiving summons, and some – such as Mehrnoush Etemadi and Hayedeh Tabesh - were arrested (see UA 333/09, AI Index MDE 13/127/2009). They have since been released. Others have been banned from travel abroad (see Iran: Renewed wave of intimidation and harassment of women's rights activists must end, 5 November 2009, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/117/2009/en>).

Amnesty International fears that such arrests and harassment of women's rights activists mark the beginning of a fresh crackdown on their peaceful activities.

For further information concerning repression of the Campaign for Equality's activists, see: Iran: Women's Rights Defenders defy repression, February 2008, AI Index MDE 13/018/2008, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/018/2008/en>. For further information concerning the aftermath of the disputed presidential election, please see Iran: Election Contested, Repression Compounded, December 2009, (Index MDE 13/123/2009), <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/123/2009/en>.

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