

URGENT ACTION

IRANIAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVIST ARRESTED

Fereshteh Shirazi, a women's rights activist and member of the One Million Signatures Campaign (also known as the Campaign for Equality), was arrested on 4 September in the city of Amol, northern Iran. The reasons for her arrest are unknown.

Fereshteh Shirazi, a mother of two and a women's rights activist, was arrested on 4 September 2011 after being summoned to the office of the Ministry of Intelligence in Amol. The precise reason for her arrest is unknown, though it is thought to be related to a case opened against her two years ago in connection with her women's rights activities and entries on her blog. If this is the case, Amnesty International would consider her a prisoner of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression. Fereshteh Shirazi is currently held in the women's section in Amol prison and is reportedly not permitted to phone her family or receive visits from them. She has not been granted access to a lawyer.

Two years ago, on 24 and 25 August 2009, Fereshteh Shirazi was summoned to the office of the Ministry of Intelligence in Amol and interrogated about the One Million Signatures Campaign, her friends in Amol, as well as her writings in connection with the campaign on her personal blog.

The One Million Signatures Campaign, launched in 2006, is a grassroots initiative composed of a network of people committed to ending discrimination against women in Iranian law. Many activists have been arrested or harassed because of their involvement with the Campaign.

Please write immediately in Persian, Arabic, English or your own language:

- Call on the Iranian authorities to release Fereshteh Shirazi immediately and unconditionally if, as appears to be the case, she is held solely for the peaceful exercise of her rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association;
- Call on the authorities to ensure that she is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and grant her immediate and regular access to her family, a lawyer of her choice and adequate medical care;
- Urge the authorities to remove unlawful restrictions on freedoms of expression, association and assembly in Iran.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 OCTOBER 2011 TO:

Head of Mazandaran Province Judiciary

Hojjatolislam val Moslemin Hossein

Talebi

General Department of Mazandaran,

Mazyar Street,

Sari, Mazandaran

Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: ryasat@mazandjudiciary.ir

Salutation: Dear Sir

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani

[care of] Public relations Office

Number 4, 2 Azizi Street

Vali Asr Ave., above Pasteur Street

intersection

Tehran,

Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: bia.judi@yahoo.com (In subject

line: FAO Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani)

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Secretary General, High Council for

Human Rights

Mohammad Javad Larijani

High Council for Human Rights

[care of] Office of the Head of Judiciary

Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave., South of

Serah-e Jomjouri,

Tehran 1316814737

Islamic Republic of Iran

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Between August and September 2009, Fereshteh Shirazi was summoned on several occasions to the office of the Ministry of Intelligence in Amol and interrogated about her women's rights activities and writings. One of these occasions was on 24 and 25 August, as mentioned above. On 12 and 13 August 2009 her house and workplace were searched by five security officials and her computer, notebooks and telephone book were confiscated. She was asked to sign a paper summoning her to the Ministry of Intelligence office the next day. When she refused to do so, she was shown the contents of the paper which contained an official stamp and listed accusations of "acting against state security", "publishing lies" and "causing unease in the public mind", by communicating with foreign websites and media.

The One Million Signatures Campaign gives basic legal training to volunteers, who travel around the country promoting the Campaign. They talk 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 aiming to collect one million signatures of Iranian nationals for a petition demanding an end to legal discrimination against women in Iran. Dozens of the Campaign's activists have been arrested or harassed for their activities for the Campaign, some while collecting signatures for the petition. Several women's rights activists are currently detained or serving prison terms for their activities, often on behalf of the Campaign, including Ronak Safazadeh, Zeynab Beyezidi, Alieh Aghdam Doust, Behareh Hedayat, Mahboubeh Karami, Maryam Bidgoli, and Faranak Farid (see also *Iran: Woman activist beaten severely in detention*, UA 273/11, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/078/2011/en>). Lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh, also a member of the Campaign who has defended many activists, is serving an 11-year prison term for her activities as a defence lawyer.

Article 19 of the Iranian Constitution provides for equal rights for all Iranians. Article 21 requires the rights of women to be protected "in accordance with Islamic criteria" and Article 26 allows the "formation of parties, societies, political or professional associations... provided they do not violate the principles of independence, freedom, national unity, the criteria of Islam, or the basis of the Islamic Republic." Members of the One Million Signatures Campaign have always stressed that their activities fully conform to Iranian law.

Name: Fereshteh Shirazi
Gender m/f: F

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