

# URGENT ACTION

## EDUCATION ACTIVISTS ARBITRARILY DETAINED

On 17 October 2023, Ahmad Fahim Azimi and Seddiqullah Afghan, two activists working with the education organization Fekre Behtar, were arbitrarily arrested at their office in Karta Char, Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, by the Taliban's General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) District 40. They are accused of working against the Taliban de-facto authorities. After being held for 72 days for interrogation in the GDI District 40, they were trialled on 27 December 2023, and subsequently sent to Pul-e-Charkhi prison. Ahmad Fahim Azimi and Seddiqullah Afghan's arrest and arbitrary detention are against international human rights law. They must be immediately and unconditionally released.

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

*Mr. Abdul Haq Wasiq*  
Director of Intelligence  
General Directorate of Intelligence  
Chaharahi Zanhaq  
Kabul, Afghanistan  
X/Twitter: @Zabehulah\_M33/ @GDI1415

Dear Mr. Abdul Haq Wasiq,

I am writing to express my concern about the arbitrary arrest and detention of education activists **Ahmad Fahim Azimi** and **Seddiqullah Afghan**, who work with Fekre Behtar, an organization which is recognized for its work with the Afghan [girls' robotics team](#). The organization is also a vocal critic of the education restrictions the Taliban imposes on women and girls.

On 17 October 2023, Ahmad Fahim Azimi and Seddiqullah Afghan were arrested by members of the Taliban's General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) District 40 at their office in Karta Char, Kabul. Both activists were kept by the GDI District 40 for 72 days for interrogation. They were falsely accused of assisting girls from the national robotic team to leave the country, inciting women protestors, and organizing protests. Both the activists and their families have refuted these allegations. On 27 December 2023, the two activists appeared in a Taliban court in Kabul. The Taliban judge deemed the interrogation findings inconclusive and ordered their transfer to Pul-e-Charkhi prison. Deprived of a fair trial, Ahmad Fahim Azimi and Seddiqullah Afghan challenged the judgement. In retaliation, the authorities subjected the two activists to torture and other ill-treatment, including sleep deprivation and solitary confinement, as the Taliban de-facto authorities wanted them to confess they were working against them.

Ahmad Fahim Azimi and Seddiqullah Afghan's situation is a clear violation of the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and fair trial rights guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Afghanistan is a state party.

I therefore urge you to:

- **Immediately and unconditionally release Ahmad Fahim Azimi and Seddiqullah Afghan.**
- **Uphold the obligations imposed under the Convention against Discrimination in Education by immediately allowing girls of all ages to attend school and receive education on an equal basis with boys.**
- **Stop the practices of abductions, arbitrary detention, and torture and other ill-treatment of people working to defend human rights including those peacefully campaigning for the right to education.**

Yours sincerely,

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ahmad Fahim Azimi and Seddiqullah Afghan are two education activists working with Fekre Behtar organization which is highly recognized for its advocacy for girls' education and its criticism of the Taliban's ban on girls' education. They have worked closely with the Afghan national robotic girls' team in Herat province. Fekre Behtar has been working to carry out educational activities in coordination with existing working legislation and procedures for the past two years offering training for Afghan girls in the fields of languages and robotics.

On 17 October 2023, at 4 pm, the Taliban GDI District 40 special forces entered Fekr Behtar's office and arbitrarily arrested Ahmad Fahim Azimi and Sediqullah Afghan. Following the arrest, they were transferred to an unknown location. The family of Azimi and Afghan managed to find out their whereabouts only after 27 days. During the arrest, the Taliban intelligence seized six laptops, Azimi and Afghan's passports, cash, flash drives containing study materials, the work permit of the organization, as well as other information related to the teachers and students.

Ahmad Fahim Azimi and Sediqullah Afghan were held in the GDI District 40 detention centre for 72 days, allegedly accused of assisting girls from the national robotic team to leave the country, inciting women to protest and organizing protests. In these 72 days, both activists faced physical and mental torture and other ill-treatment. They have been deprived of sleep and kept in solitary confinement. They were not provided access to a lawyer during the interrogation period, nor access to medical support.

On 27 December 2023, after both activists were presented at a Taliban court in Kabul, the judge did not find the interrogation findings satisfactory, and decided to send both activists to Pul-e-Charkhi prison in Kabul. The activists protested the interrogation and the judgement. As a result, they were pressurized to confess in a video that they were working against the Taliban de facto authorities. Both activists refused to give such confession.

When the location of the two activists became known, their family members were allowed to visit them every 15 days. They were allowed to speak via phone in the presence of the Taliban soldiers in both rooms. Since they were sent to Pul-e-Charkhi prison, family visits have not been allowed and thus they do not know the conditions of the two activists in the prison.

Only after the court's decision, the families of the activists managed to engage two defence lawyers, aiming to appeal the Taliban court's ruling and advocate for the release of the two activists. Nonetheless, there's a prevailing concern among the families that these lawyers are facing intimidation, harassment and risks of detention from the Taliban. This repression and restriction of civic space raise doubts about the ability of the lawyers to effectively bring forth evidence of torture and other ill-treatment, and the unfair trials faced by the activists.

The United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan ([UNAMA](#)) have condemned Azimi and Afghan's arbitrary arrest and called for an immediate end to arbitrary arrests, as well as for the rights to family visit, lawyers, care, and fair trial to be upheld. UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders [Mary Lawlor](#) has called for the immediate release of these two activists.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** English, Dari, Farsi and Pashto.  
You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 29 March 2024**

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PRONOUN: Ahmad Fahim Azimi and Seddiqullah Afghan (both he/him)**