

URGENT ACTION

WOMAN ACTIVIST BEATEN SEVERELY IN DETENTION

Faranak Farid was arrested on 3 September in Tabriz, north-west Iran, during demonstrations over the drying of Lake Oroumieh, which is situated between the Iranian provinces of East and West Azerbaijan. She is reported to have been tortured and otherwise ill-treated in detention.

Women's rights activist and journalist **Faranak Farid**, aged 50, was arrested by plainclothes officers on 3 September 2011 while shopping in Tabriz. Her arrest was apparently in connection with protests that began in April 2011 calling on the Iranian authorities to remove dams on rivers feeding Lake Oroumieh, which is at risk of drying up. She was detained without charge and her home was searched, though it is not known if any items were removed. During her arrest, she is reported to have been assaulted and beaten so severely that she is now unable to move one of her arms. She also lost the hearing in her left ear, at least temporarily.

Faranak Farid was interrogated for many hours at a detention centre in Tabriz. Her glasses were taken from her and she was forced to sign a document that she could not read. She is believed then to have been brought before a judge, who ordered her temporary detention for 10 days. It appears that she may be accused of "insulting the Supreme Leader", "propaganda against the system", and "acting against national security".

Despite requesting access to a doctor, Faranak Farid is not known to have received medical care up to now, deepening concern for her health and well-being.

She is now being held in the women's section of Tabriz Central Prison. Her sister was allowed to visit her there for 45 minutes on 12 September 2011 but an independent lawyer appointed to represent her has not yet had access to her.

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

- Express concern that Faranak Farid appears to be a prisoner of conscience detained solely for the legitimate exercise of her human rights, in which case she should be released immediately and unconditionally;
- Urge the Iranian authorities to conduct an immediate independent investigation into her reported torture and other ill-treatment and bring to justice any officials found responsible;
- Call for Faranak Farid to be given immediate access to an independent doctor and all necessary medical care.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 25 OCTOBER 2011 TO:

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

Head of East Azerbaijan Province
Judiciary
 Hojjatoleslam Sharifi,
 Judiciary of East Azerbaijan,
 Central Complex,
 Beginning of Vali-Asr Hill,
 Tabriz, East Azerbaijan 5157733135,
 Islamic Republic of Iran
 Fax: 009841133201109
Salutation: Dear Sir

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 the
 Judiciary, Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave.
 south of Serah-e Jomhouri, Tehran
 1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran
 Email: info@humanrights-iran.ir (subject
 line: FAO Mohammad Javad Larijani)

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

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

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Faranak Farid is member of One Million Signatures Campaign, also known as the Campaign for Equality. She is also a member of the Azerbaijani minority in Iran, a poet, a translator and editor of the women's section of the banned monthly *Dilmaj*. In 2008 she was summoned to the Ministry of Intelligence for questioning regarding a conference on women in Turkey she was due to attend.

Another member of the One Million Signatures Campaign, Fereshteh Shirazi was arrested on 4 September 2011 in the city of Amol, northern Iran, in connection with charges brought against her in 2009 for her women's rights activities and her writings. She is held in Amol prison and has not been allowed visits or telephone calls.

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. The 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 are currently detained or serving prison terms for their activities on behalf of the Campaign.

Iranian Azerbaijanis speak a Turkic language and are mainly Shi'a Muslims. As the largest minority in Iran, they make up 25-30 per cent of the population; they live mainly in the north and north-west of the country and in Tehran. Although generally well integrated into Iranian society, in recent years they have increasingly called for greater cultural and linguistic rights, including the right to education in Azerbaijani Turkic.

Lake Oroumieh (also spelt Urmia, Urumieh, Oroumiye) is a salt lake in north-western Iran. The lake is situated between the Iranian provinces of East Azerbaijan and West Azerbaijan. It is the largest lake in the Middle East and the third largest salt water lake on Earth. More than 40 dams have been built over 13 rivers that feed the lake and the recent drought, which started in 1999, has significantly decreased the annual amount of water the lake receives. This in turn has increased the salinity of the water prompting fears of an ecological disaster in the region.

At the beginning of April 2011 demonstrations took place in Tabriz, Oroumieh and reportedly other cities where Iranian Azerbaijanis live, calling on the Iranian authorities to remove dams on rivers feeding Lake Oroumieh due to the risk that the lake could dry up. Similar to protests in previous years, the protesters brought glasses of water and poured them into the rivers feeding the lake or the lake itself (see also: *Iran: Azerbaijanis arrested in lake protest*, UA 102/11, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/038/2011/en>). Other largely peaceful rallies took place between 22 August and 8 September 2011; in response, the authorities carried out scores of arrests and the security forces are alleged to have used excessive force against protesters; unconfirmed reports suggest that several demonstrators may have been killed.

Name: Faranak Farid
Gender m/f: F

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