

URGENT ACTION

DETAINED HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST RISKS TORTURE

Women's rights activist Maryam Bahreman was arrested on 11 May 2011 by security officials, believed to be from the Ministry of Intelligence, who searched her home for three hours and then took her away as well as some of her personal possessions. She is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment. Amnesty International considers her to be a prisoner of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of her rights to freedom of expression and association.

Maryam Bahreman is a member of the One Million Signatures Campaign, also known as the Campaign for Equality, in the city of Shiraz, and was also General Secretary of Pars Women's Organization (*Sazman-e Zanan Pars*), which was closed in 2007. She attended the 55th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, in New York in February-March 2011, where she spoken publicly on "Information and Communications Technologies in Iran from a gender perspective". Shortly before her arrest, she had written a letter addressed to opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi, and his wife, political activist Zahra Rahnevar, on her blog which condemned their continuing house arrest.

The officials who arrested her had an arrest warrant issued by the Revolutionary Court in Shiraz which apparently accused her of "acting against state security". Maryam Bahreman's whereabouts are unknown and she is believed to be held in conditions amounting to an enforced disappearance. Her family has had no news from her since her arrest.

Torture or other ill-treatment of detainees in Iran is common, and is often used to try to force them to make "confessions", often televised, which can be used as evidence against them in court, in violation of the prohibition of torture and Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iran is a state party.

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

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to release Maryam Bahreman immediately and unconditionally, and all other imprisoned members of the One Million Signature Campaign held solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association;
- Urging them to disclose her whereabouts to her family, and grant her immediate access to her family, a lawyer of her choice and any medical treatment she may require;
- Calling on them to ensure that she is protected from torture or other ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 JUNE 2011 TO:

Head of Fars Province Judiciary

Mr Zabihollah Khodaiyan

Piroozi Street

Shiraz, Fars Province

Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: khodaiyan@dadfars.ir

Salutation: Dear Sir

Minister of Intelligence

Heydar Moslehi

Ministry of Intelligence

Second Negarestan Street

Pasdaran Avenue

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

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 the

Judiciary, Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave.

south of Serah-e Jomhuri, Tehran

1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran

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

The One Million Signatures Campaign, also known as the Campaign for Equality, 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.

At least seven members of the Campaign are currently in prison for their activities promoting human rights and gender equality. Most recently, **Mahboubeh Karami** began serving a three-year sentence in Tehran's Evin Prison on 15 May 2011, imposed for her peaceful activities in support of greater rights for women. **Alieh Aghdam-Doust** is serving a three-year prison sentence in Evin Prison for participating in a peaceful demonstration in June 2006 against laws which discriminate against women in Iran.

Fatemeh Masjedi began serving a six-month sentence in January 2011 in the city of Qom, south-west of Tehran, in Langaroud Prison. She had been convicted of "spreading propaganda against the system in favour of a feminist group [the Campaign] by distributing and collecting signatures for a petition to change laws discriminating against women, and for publication of materials in support of a feminist group opposed to the system". Another woman, Maryam Bidgoli, is facing imprisonment in the same case. **Zeynab Beyezidi**, a member of the Kurdish minority who is also a member of the Kurdistan Human Rights Organization (KHRO), is serving a four-and-a-half-year sentence in Zanjan Prison, in the north-west of the country, in connection with her membership of the KHRO and her activities for the Campaign. **Ronak Safazadeh**, a Campaign member who is also a member of the Kurdish minority, is serving a six-year sentence, convicted of membership of a Kurdish armed group, PJAK. With regard to the charge of membership of PJAK, her lawyer stated that "the activities of my client were limited to activities within the Azar Mehr Women's NGO, and so her activities in PJAK were carried out toward this end as well. My client aimed to research 'the reasons for women's participation in PJAK under difficult conditions'." Campaign member **Behareh Hedayat**, a student and women's rights activist who was serving a nine-and-a-half-year sentence for these activities, was sentenced in April 2011 to an additional six months in prison in connection with a statement she had written in prison. Campaign member **Hengameh Shahidi**, a journalist and political activist, is serving a six-year sentence in Evin Prison. At her trial, the charges against her included the collection of signatures for the Campaign.

Article 19 of the Iranian Constitution provides for equal rights for all Iranians. Article 21 requires the rights of women to be protected 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 Signature Campaign have always stressed that their activities fully conform to Iranian law. Articles 2 and 3 of the ICCPR, to which Iran is a state party, prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex. Article 9 prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention and Article 14 provides for the right to a fair trial, including the right of access to a lawyer. Articles 19, 21 and 22 provide for freedom of expression, assembly and association.

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