

URGENT ACTION

STOP PUNISHING WOMEN PROTESTERS

Since the Taliban returned to power in August 2021, women protesting Taliban's draconian policies have been forcibly disappeared, arbitrarily arrested, and detained and subjected to torture and other-ill treatment. Amongst those, the Taliban arbitrarily arrested and detained four prominent women human rights defenders Parisa Azada, Neda Parwani, Zholia Parsi, and Manizha Seddiqi, between September and November 2023. These four women human rights defenders have not had access to lawyers or regular family visits while in detention and are at risk of torture and other forms of ill-treatment. They have not been charged with any offences. Neda and Zholia's family members were also arrested. These women human rights defenders and their family members must be released immediately and unconditionally.

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 Zanbaq
Kabul, Afghanistan

Dear Mr. Abdul Haq Wasiq,

I am writing to express grave concern over the arbitrary arrests and detentions of prominent women human rights defenders Parisa Azada, Neda Parwani, Zholia Parsi, and Manizha Seddiqi in Afghanistan. These women have been arbitrarily detained simply for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Neda and Zholia were arrested together with members of their families.

Zholia Parsi, a leading activist for women and girls' rights and founder of the Spontaneous Movement of Afghan Women, was arrested and detained along with her son. Neda Parwani, a woman human rights defender and popular Youtuber, was arrested with her husband and their four-year-old son. Manizha Seddiqi, a woman human rights defender and member of the Spontaneous Movement of Afghan Women, was forcibly disappeared and found weeks later in the custody of the Taliban. Parisa Azada, a member of the Afghanistan Women's Movement for Justice and Freedom, has also been arbitrarily arrested and detained in an undisclosed location.

Amnesty International's findings indicate that these women protesters are deprived of family visits and lack access to lawyers, as well as access to their medical needs.

I am also deeply concerned that they are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment, a concern amplified by Amnesty International's documentation on people deprived of their liberty in Taliban's detention centres and prisons. Between January 2022 and July 2023, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported that half of the 1,600 human rights violations in Taliban prisons involved torture or other cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. Additionally, people are often detained in undignified conditions and without access to the necessary medical care.

These arrests contravene international human rights law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Afghanistan is a state party. They clearly violate the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. I therefore call on you to:

- *Immediately and unconditionally release Parisa Azada, Manizha Seddiqi, Zholia Parsi, and Neda Parwani, and any of their family members also held in detention.*
 - *Pending their release, I urge you to ensure their detention conditions meet international standards, and that they are provided with access to lawyers and are able to receive family visits.*
 - *Immediately stop subjecting women and their families to arbitrary arrest and detention, enforced disappearance, and other grave human rights violations, simply for exercising their rights.*
- Yours sincerely,*

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Neda Parwani, Parisa Azada, Manizha Seddiqi, and Zholia Parsi were arbitrarily arrested from their homes on the 9th of September, the 27th of September, and the 9th of October respectively. It is reported that Zholia Parsi, Neda Parwani, and Parisa Azada are held in the Taliban District 40 detention; however, Manizha Seddiqi is sent to Pol Charkhi prison on the 5th of December 2023. On the 4th of December, it was reported that Zholia Parsi was taken to hospital and back to prison due to a deteriorated health condition which could be the result of torture and ill-treatment.

Since taking control of Kabul in August 2021, [the Taliban de facto authorities have increasingly violated the rights of women and girls](#), prohibiting their political participation and involvement in public life. The policies adopted by the Taliban de facto authorities have curtailed the rights to freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly, as well as the rights to equality and non-discrimination. Despite this, women have led peaceful protests against the Taliban in various Afghan cities, including Kabul, Faizabad, Herat, and Mazar-i-Sharif.

Women organising or participating in those protests have been subjected to unlawful use of force, arbitrary arrests, and detentions, enforced disappearances, torture, and other forms of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. In August 2023, at least eight members of the Women's National Unity and Solidarity Movement were arrested and detained for several hours because they were organising protests. During protests, women protesters are subjected to verbal abuse, harassment, intimidation, and threats by armed Taliban agents, who greatly outnumber the protesters and routinely destroy or confiscate banners, leaflets, and other information materials of the protesters. Additionally, some journalists reporting on these protests have been subject to arbitrary arrests and ill-treatment.

The Taliban de facto authorities have also followed women post-protests to arrest them. Several women have been arrested at gunpoint in their homes or in safe houses, often violently. Some of the women's male relatives have also been severely beaten by Taliban actors at the time of the arrests. Women arrested have been detained incommunicado and repeatedly subject to torture or other forms of ill-treatment.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, Dari/Farsi/Pashto

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 01 February 2024

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Parisa Azada, Manizha Seddiqi, Zholia Parsi, and Neda Parwani (she – her)