

# URGENT ACTION

## RELEASE JOURNALIST CONVICTED OF PROPAGANDA

Mahdi Ansari, 27, is a journalist who was working with Afghan News Agency. On 5 October 2024, he was arrested by members of the Taliban General Directorate of Intelligence District 40 near his office. He has been sentenced to one and a half year's imprisonment. During his initial trial, on 1 January 2025, in absence of his family and defence lawyer, the court accused him of spreading propaganda against the Taliban de facto authorities due to his journalistic reports and Facebook posts. While in detention, Mahdi Ansari has faced ill-treatment, including solitary confinement, his mental health has deteriorated, and he has been denied regular family visits. His family was able to meet him after one month of his arbitrary detention and for five minutes only. He must be immediately and unconditionally released as he is detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights.

**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

Email of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: [info@mfa.gov.af](mailto:info@mfa.gov.af)

Dear Mr. Abdul Haq Wasiq,

I am writing to express my concern about the arbitrary arrest and detention of journalist **Mahdi Ansari**.

On 5 October 2024, Mahdi Ansari was arbitrarily arrested by members of the Taliban's General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) District 40 near his office in Dasht-e-Barchi area, western part of Kabul. At the time of arrest, Taliban GDI soldiers surrounded him and without an explanation or providing an official arrest warrant, took him to GDI District 40. The Taliban alleged that Mahdi Ansari disseminated anti-regime materials, claiming they possess "substantial evidence". He was subsequently accused of propaganda against the Taliban de facto authorities, a charge based on his past work as a journalist in which he had reported on the first anniversary of a deadly suicide attack on Kabul's Shia minority and commemorated the second anniversary of this attack on his Facebook. During his interrogation and detention, he was subjected to ill-treatment including being kept in solitary confinement. His mental health has also severely deteriorated.

On 1 January 2025, Mahdi Ansari was unfairly tried at the Taliban court in Kabul, without access to a defence lawyer and in absence of his family. The Taliban judge accused him of propaganda against the Taliban de facto authorities, referring to his past reports and peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression. He was sentenced to one and half years in prison. Mahdi Ansari is still being held in the GDI 40, where his family, only permitted to visit him after one month of his detention, are now allowed to visit him only once a week where they can talk only for five to six minutes via telephone through a glass window.

Mahdi Ansari's detention and conviction is in clear violation of his rights to freedom of expression and fair trial 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 Mahdi Ansari;**
- **Ensure that, until his release, he is held in conditions meeting international standards and has regular access to adequate healthcare, legal representation, and family visits;**
- **Stop the practices of arbitrary detention, and torture and other ill-treatment of people working to defend human rights including those peacefully promoting social change and non-discrimination.**

Yours sincerely,

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mahdi Ansari is a 27-year-old journalist who had been working with Afghan News Agency at the time of arrest. Previously, he had worked with various media channels such as Panjara Daily, Hasht-e Sobh and Jawan TV. For the past three years, his reporting covered ongoing developments and restrictions imposed by Taliban de facto authorities, published through his work and also through his personal Facebook and YouTube channel, amidst the Taliban's widespread restrictions and surveillance of journalists and media workers. Notably, Mahdi Ansari worked on a sensitive report published by AFKA on the first anniversary of a deadly suicide attack on Kabul's Shia minority in 2023. A year later, he commemorated the day with a Facebook post.

For the first two days of his detention, his family were unaware of his whereabouts. It was only after contacting the local police station that his arrest by the GDI was confirmed. The GDI initially denied his arrest and knowing of his whereabouts but eventually announced that he was under their interrogation.

[Reporters Without Borders](#) issued a statement condemning his arbitrary arrest, calling for his immediate release and for the Taliban to end its persecution of journalists. The [International Federation of Journalists and the Afghanistan Independent Journalists' Union](#) have also demanded Mahdi Ansari's release. The [Afghanistan Journalists' Support Organization](#) has called Mahdi Ansari's arrest unlawful and in violation of freedom of expression. The Afghanistan Journalists Center has condemned Mahdi Ansari's arbitrary arrest and called for his unconditional release.

**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: 4 May 2025**

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

**NAME AND PRONOUN:** Mahdi Ansari [He/him]