AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
PRESS RELEASE

News Flash

AI Index: MDE 16/011/2003 (Public)
News Service No: 125
20 May 2003

Jordan: Toujan al-Faisal denied basic rights

Amnesty International today expressed its concern that Toujan al-Faisal is not being allowed to stand as a candidate in the upcoming Jordanian parliamentary elections of 17 June.

"Toujan al-Faisal is being denied her right to stand for elections on account of an unfair trial for expressing non-violent political beliefs," Amnesty International said today.

"The Jordanian authorities have pledged to increase the representation of women in the coming elections. However, they are seriously undermining the legitimacy of the elections by curtailing the civil and political rights of an outspoken Jordanian woman."

The governor of Amman and the head of the elections committee, Abdul Karim Malahmeh, rejected Toujan al-Faisal's application on the grounds that she had previously committed a non-political offence. However, al-Faisal, Jordan's first-ever woman MP, was sentenced to one and a half years in prison following an unfair trial by the State Security Court on 16 May 2002. She was charged with publishing material deemed 'harmful to the country's reputation and that of its citizens' and 'tarnishing the Jordanian state'. Amnesty International then considered al-Faisal a prisoner of conscience detained solely for the non-violent expression of her political beliefs. She was released by royal pardon on 26 June 2002 after she went on hunger strike, but the pardon did not annul her alleged crime.

Toujan al-Faisal was detained on 16 March 2002 after she sent an email letter to the King, which was published on a website. Her letter, which accused the Prime Minister of benefiting financially from a government decision to double car insurance costs, was considered 'defamatory to the state'.

For more information, please see:
Jordan: Sentence against Toujan al-Faisal a blow to freedom of expression,
http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engmde160082002

Public Document

****

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: http://www.amnesty.org

For latest human rights news view http://news.amnesty.org