

Release Ms. Bayazidi! Stop detention, harassment and prosecution of human rights defenders protected by international conventions ratified by Iran!



Thursday, 21 August 2008, Iran - Human rights activist Ms. Bayazidi was arrested recently and sentenced to 4 years in prison. Her family and lawyer have not been allowed to meet her. Ms. Bayazidi embarks on hunger strike to protest the revolutionary court charges.

Defend International (DI) calls on Iranian government to drop all judicial proceedings against her, and to release her immediately and unconditionally. DI member Ms. Bayazidi must not be punished for human rights activities.

The case:

Ms. Zaynab Bayazidi, born 22/9/1979, a human rights defender, was reportedly arbitrarily detained by the Iranian intelligence services, the Ettelaat, on July 9, 2008 in the Kurdish city of Mahabad accused of participating in the One Million Signatures Campaign against discriminatory laws and for choosing a Kurdish name "Zilan" for her store. According to Human Rights Advocates in Iran, Ms. Bayazidi had "her case transferred to a court for review on July 2008. However, her review case was postponed for unspecified reasons."

On August 19, 2008 Ms. Bayazidi was tried and sentenced to four years imprisonment in Exile in the city of Zanjan, in West Azarbaijan Province. According to DI members in Iran, Ms. Bayazidi's defence lawyer was not allowed to attend the trial which failed to meet the basic standards for fair trial. Ms. Bayazidi has now begun a hunger strike and submitted a letter objecting the sentence issued in her case.

Ms. Bayazidi has focused on advancing women's rights and has been detained in the past by the Iranian authorities for her activities. She was aware of the difficult circumstances under which women's rights activists work. Despite this, she joined the struggle for equality and demanded that laws which discriminate against women be revised. She pledged to keep up her activities until those demands were met by authorities.

Ms. Bayazidi has demonstrated her commitment to defend human rights and fundamental freedoms in Iran. She has been arrested due to her participation in the "One Million Signatures Demanding Changes to Discriminatory Laws" campaign, for peacefully exercising her right to freedom of expression, association and assembly and for defending women's rights.

The Call:

We call on the international community to condemn the detention and prosecution of DI member Ms. Bayazidi and demand her immediate release.

We urge the Iranian authorities to stop detaining, harassing and prosecuting human rights defenders who are simply exercising rights protected by international conventions ratified by Iran.

Iranian government must drop all charges against activists who have peacefully advocated for human rights.

Iran must encourage civil society to promote and facilitate the enjoyment of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, to allow women's rights defenders to use civil means to address their concerns, and to raise public awareness of the equal rights and responsibilities of male and female through campaigns, training, distribution of manuals and brochures etc.

Defend International

DEFEND INTERNATIONAL (DI) is an international NGO working to stop human rights violations, especially in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). It forms a worldwide community of DI defenders with members, activists, friends and subscribers in every part of the world.

Please send letters to:

Leader of the Islamic Republic,

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei,

The Office of the Supreme Leader,

Shoahada Street,

Qom,

Islamic Republic of Iran,

Faxes: + 98.21.649.5880 / 21.774.2228,

Email: info@leader.ir / istiftaa@wilayah.org / webmaster@wilayah.org ;

President

His Excellency Mahmoud Ahmadinejad,

The Presidency, Palestine Avenue,

Azerbaijan Intersection,

Tehran,

Islamic Republic of Iran,

Fax: + 98.21.649.5880,

E-mail: dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir

Head of the Judiciary,

His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Hashemi Shahrudi,

Ministry of Justice,

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Minister of Foreign Affairs,

His Excellency Mr. Manuchehr Motaki,

Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

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Fax: + 98.21.390.1999,

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Ambassador Mr. Ahani,

Embassy of Iran in Brussels,

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Email: iran-embassy@yahoo.com .

Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran,

Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 28,

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Fax: +41 22 7330203,

Email: mission.iran@ties.itu.int

Below is a sample letter:

Leader of the Islamic Republic,

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei,

The Office of the Supreme Leader,

Shoahada Street,

Qom,

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Your Excellency,

I am deeply concerned at the news that Ms. Zaynab Bayazidi was detained on July 9, 2008 in the city of Mahabad and has been sentenced to four years imprisonment - punished for participating in a women campaign, and for choosing a Kurdish name for her store. Ms. Bayazidi is member of Defend International, an NGO working to stop human rights violations, especially in the Middle East and North Africa. In the past Ms. Bayazidi had received warnings from the Iranian authorities for her actions in the defence of women rights in Iran.

I appeal to you on humanitarian grounds, and in furtherance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in numerous international human rights and humanitarian treaties and declarations adopted by the United Nations, to drop all the charges against Ms. Bayazidi. In addition I appeal for the immediate and unconditional release of Ms. Bayazidi as a prisoner of conscience.

I urge you to guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Ms. Bayazidi. I also urge you to put an end to all acts of harassment against all human rights defenders and to allow them to continue their peaceful activities without any obstacles.

Furthermore I urge you to conform with the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1998, especially its Article 1, which states that "everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels", as well as Article 12.2, which provides that "the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration".

Lastly, I urge you to take concrete steps to bring laws governing the lives of women in line with international human rights standards, and in line with Iran's own international commitments.

Finally I express my solidarity with women's rights defender Ms. Zaynab Bayazidi and would like to express my hope that she will be released very soon.

Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter.

Yours respectfully,

For further information on the case and on Defend International, please go to:

http://www.defendinternational.org:80/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=238&Itemid=73