

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. Manizha Seddiqi, a women human rights defender, was forcibly disappeared on 9 October 2023 and later found in Taliban custody. She was sent to prison on 5 December 2023. She does not have access to lawyers or regular family visits while in prison and is at risk of torture and other ill treatment. She has not been charged with any offences. Manizha Seddiqi 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
Email: info@mfa.gov.af

Dear Mr. Abdul Haq Wasiq,

I am writing to express my grave concern over the arbitrary arrest and detention of prominent woman human rights defender Manizha Seddiqi in Afghanistan. She has been arbitrarily detained simply for exercising her rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Manizha Seddiqi, also a member of the Spontaneous Movement of Afghan Women, was forcibly disappeared on 9 October 2023 and found weeks later in the custody of the Taliban. She was sent to Pul-e-Charkhi prison in Kabul on 5 December 2023.

Amnesty International's findings indicate that Manizha Seddiqi has been deprived of family visits, lacks access to lawyers as well as access to medical care and is in a deteriorating health condition.

I am also deeply concerned that she is 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.

The arrest of Manizha Seddiqi contravenes international human rights law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Afghanistan is a state party. It is a clear violation of the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. I therefore call on you to:

- *Immediately and unconditionally release Manizha Seddiqi*
- *Pending her release, ensure that her detention conditions meet international standards, and that she is provided with access to lawyers and medical care, and can 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

Manizha Seddiqi was forcibly disappeared on 9 October 2023 and later found in the Taliban's custody. It is reported that Manizha Seddiqi was then sent to Pul-e-Charkhi prison in Kabul on 5 December 2023. Reports suggest that without access to medical care her health condition is deteriorating.

Around the same time Manizha Seddiqi was disappeared and then detained, the Taliban arbitrarily arrested and detained three prominent women human rights defenders, namely Parisa Azada, Neda Parwani, and Zholia Parsi, between September and November 2023. These women human rights defenders did not have access to lawyers or regular family visits while in detention and were not charged with any offences. They were subsequently released; however, Manizha Seddiqi remains in prison until this day.

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 subjected 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: 18 March 2024
Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Manizha Seddiqi (she – her)