

URGENT ACTION

YOUNG HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AT RISK OF TORTURE

Young Iranian human rights defenders Shima Babaei, who is campaigning against compulsory veiling, and her husband Dariush Zand are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. Both have been detained in Tehran's Evin prison, without access to family and lawyer following their arrest by the Ministry of Intelligence on 1 February in connection with their peaceful human rights work. They are prisoners of conscience.

On 1 February, the Ministry of Intelligence officials arrested Iranian women human rights defender **Shima Babaei** (or Babaei) and her husband **Dariush Zand**, also a human rights defender, in the city of Behbahan in southern Khuzestan province. They were held for around 48 hours in detention centres run by the Ministry of Intelligence in Behbahan and Ahvaz, both in Khuzestan province, and then transferred to Section 209 of Evin prison, where they remain held without access to their families and lawyers. Their family last heard from them on 6 February when Shima Babaei was allowed to make a one-minute phone call. According to her family and lawyer, who have repeatedly visited the Office of the Prosecutor in Evin prison to seek information on the two human rights defenders' fate, the officials have said that they will not grant them access to a lawyer or disclose any information until their interrogations are complete.

Shima Babaei's arrest and detention appears to be part of a wider violent crackdown on women in Iran who peacefully protest against the abusive and discriminatory practice of compulsory veiling. Several videos in which Shima Babaei vocalizes her support for the White Wednesdays campaign, which urges women to share pictures and videos of themselves wearing white headscarves or pieces of clothing in protest at compulsory veiling, are published on the campaign's social media platforms, including a short documentary in which she interviews members of the public about their views on compulsory veiling. In response to such activism, she was summoned for interrogation several times prior to her current arrest and threatened with imprisonment.

This is the second time in two months that Dariush Zand has been detained. He was arrested and detained in Evin Prison on 25 December 2017 for his peaceful participation in protests against poverty and political repression, and released on 6 January 2018. During that time, Dariush Zand alleges that the Revolutionary Guards repeatedly tortured him, including by kicking, punching, and beatings with cables and hoses. According to his family, his body was bruised and his teeth broken. He also suffered from persistent headaches and dizziness which required medical treatment. He is feared to be in poor health from the injuries he allegedly sustained the beatings.

1) TAKE ACTION

Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:

- Release Shima Babaei and Dariush Zand immediately and unconditionally as they are prisoners of conscience held solely for their peaceful human rights activism;
- Ensure they are protected from torture and other ill-treatment and are allowed regular access to their family and an independent lawyer of their own choosing, pending their release;
- End the persecution of women who peacefully protest against compulsory veiling, release those so detained and abolish compulsory veiling laws, which are discriminatory and abusive, including Article 638 of the Penal Code.

Contact these two officials by 6 April, 2018:

High Council for Human Rights
 Mohammad Javad Larijani
 Esfaniar Boulevard, Niayesh Intersection
 Vali Asr Avenue, Tehran, Iran
info@humanrights-iran.ir

H.E. Gholamali Khoshroo
 Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
 622 Third Avenue, 34th Floor
 New York, NY 10017
 Phone: (212) 687-2020 | Fax: (212) 867-7086
 Email: iran@un.int
Salutation: Dear Excellency

2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 1 February, when Shima Babae and Dariush Zand were arrested, Ministry of Intelligence officials also detained in coordinated arrests across Iran three other young human rights defenders, including **Saeed Eghbali, Mahmoud Masoumi and Behnam Mousivand**. They are similarly held in incommunicado detention in Section 209 of Evin prison and the prosecution authorities have told their families that they will not be allowed access to their lawyers until their interrogations are complete. There are grave concerns that they too are facing torture and other ill-treatment at the hands of intelligence officials conducting the interrogations. These human rights defenders are all prisoners of conscience and must be released immediately and unconditionally.

On 15 August 2017, Shima Babae received a threatening phone call from the office of the Morality Security Police in Tehran summoning her for interrogation. This was after several videos in which she made statements against compulsory veiling were posted on the social media platforms of White Wednesdays. When she refused to go, the authorities at the Morality Security Police issued a written summons requiring her appearance at their office in Tehran on 19 August 2017. On that day, she was interrogated for about one and a half hours, without the presence of a lawyer. She has said that interrogators accused her of involvement with an “anti-revolutionary” campaign and “disobeying” the country’s laws, and yelled and swore at her when she insisted on her right to peacefully express her opposition to compulsory veiling, and that when her father, who was present in the interrogation room, objected to the verbal abuse, two security officials grabbed him by the arms and pushed him against the door. Shima Babae and her father were then transferred to the Office of the Prosecutor in Zone 21 of Tehran, where they were told that she will be detained until a surety bond was produced to secure her release and that her father, **Ebrahim Babae**, will be charged with “insulting public officials”. She was then taken to Vozara detention centre in Tehran and held there for several hours until her family secured her release on surety. She subsequently received several telephone summons from the same office of Morality Security Police but refused to comply as it is illegal under Iranian law to summon a person for interrogations by telephone.

Based on information provided by officials, lawyers and independent activists and media outlets, since 27 December 2017, the Iranian authorities have violently attacked and arrested more than 35 women in Tehran alone, for peacefully protesting against compulsory veiling, including by taking off their headscarves in busy public locations and silently waving them around on the end of a stick. The real number of women arrested is likely much higher than 35 as women have engaged in similar acts of protest elsewhere in the country. Those arrested include **Vida Movahed, Narges Hosseini and Azam Jangravi**, who were released on bail after spending a period ranging from several days to several weeks in detention, and **Shaparak Shajarizadeh**, who remains in detention and has suffered beatings, according to her lawyer. Some of the women arrested have been transferred to Shahr-e Rey prison, which holds women convicted of violent offences in overcrowded and unhygienic conditions, without access to safe drinkable water, adequate food, healthcare and fresh air. Reports from the prison indicate high levels of violence towards inmates by other inmates and prison officials, rampant drug use and infectious diseases.

On 22 February, a video went viral online showing police officers violently arresting a woman after pushing her off a concrete structure on which she was posing without a headscarf. Her name has been reported as **Maryam Shariatmadari**. There are concerns that the fall resulted in physical injuries for which she was denied access to adequate medical care. The Iranian authorities, including the Chief Prosecutor of Iran and the Head of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran, have insulted women who are speaking out against compulsory veiling by calling them “moron”, “infantile”, “deceived”, “perverted” and “wicked” and warned that they will face harsh penalties for breaking the law and advancing the agendas of “foreign enemies”.

Under international law, Iranian legislation which provides for compulsory veiling constitutes a clear violation of a number of key human rights. It is deeply discriminatory of women and girls, who are its direct and sole target. Such compulsion in law also violates the rights of women and girls to freedom of expression, thought, conscience, religion and privacy, and specific rights of children. In compelling women and girls to cover their hair, including through violent and humiliating acts and arbitrary arrests and detention, the authorities have also deeply hurt women’s dignity and perpetrated in legal terms cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, which is absolutely prohibited under international law. Where they cause severe pain or suffering, whether mental or physical, such acts amount to torture.

Name: Shima Babae, Dariush Zand

Gender m/f: both

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