

JAILED IRANIAN ARTIST ON HUNGER STRIKE**IRAN**

Atena Farghadani (f)

Iranian prisoner of conscience and painter, Atena Farghadani, has been on a hunger strike, protesting her detention, since 9 February and is now critically ill. She has been held for her peaceful activities including a cartoon criticizing members of parliament.

Atena Farghadani, a 28-year-old painter, started a "wet" hunger strike, (taking water but not food) on 9 February 2015 in protest at her continued detention in Gharchak Prison, in the city of Varamin, which does not have a section for political prisoners and where conditions of detention are extremely poor. On 25 February Atena Farghadani's lawyer said that she had suffered a heart attack and had briefly lost consciousness as a result of her hunger strike. She has said that she will not end her hunger strike unless the authorities meet her request to transfer her to Tehran's Evin Prison. On 26 February Atena Farghadani was taken to a hospital outside prison.

Atena Farghadani was first arrested on 23 August 2014 for her peaceful activities, including meeting with families of political prisoners, and for drawing a cartoon that criticized members of parliament for considering a bill that sought to criminalize voluntary sterilization as part of a larger plan to restrict access to contraception and family planning services. She was held in Section 2A of Evin Prison for almost two months, including 15 days in solitary confinement, without access to a lawyer or her family. She was released on 6 November 2014 on bail. On 10 January 2015 she was rearrested after she had been summoned to a Revolutionary Court, possibly in reprisal for a video message that she had published after her release, in which she explained how female prison guards had beaten her and subjected her to degrading body searches and other ill-treatment. According to her parents in media interviews, Atena Farghadani was subjected to beatings in the courtroom before being transferred to Gharchak Prison. Charges against her include "spreading propaganda against the system", "insulting members of the parliament through paintings" and "insulting the Supreme Leader".

Please write immediately in Persian, English, Arabic, French, Spanish or your own language:

- * Calling on the Iranian authorities to release Atena Farghadani immediately and unconditionally, as she is a prisoner of conscience who has been held solely for her peaceful exercise of her rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly;
- * Urging them to allow her regular visits from her family and lawyer and ensure she is protected from torture and other ill-treatment and receives any medical care she may require;
- * Reminding them that the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners require that different categories of prisoners be kept in separate institutions or parts of institutions.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 10 APRIL 2015 TO: (Time difference = GMT + 3.5 hrs / BST + 2.5 hrs)

Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader
Islamic Republic Street - End of
Shahid Keshvar Doust Street
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: (via website)
<http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/index.php?p=letter>
Twitter: @khamenei_ir (English),
@Khamenei_ar (Arabic),
@Khamenei_es (Spanish).
Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary
Ayatollah Sadegh Larjani
c/o Public Relations Office
Number 4, 2 Azizi Street intersection
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
President of the Islamic republic of
Iran
Hassan Rouhani
The Presidency
Pasteur Street, Pasteur Square
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Twitter: @HassanRouhani (English),
@Rouhani_ir (Persian)

PLEASE SEND COPIES OF YOUR APPEAL TO

Son Excellence, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur de la République Islamique d'Iran, Ambassade de la République Islamique d'Iran, 4 avenue d'Iéna, 75116 Paris. Email: cabinet@amb-iran.fr

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Atena Farghadani was first arrested on 23 August 2014 at her house in Tehran when she was returning from a hospital visit for a hand injury. Twelve officers, believed to belong to the Revolutionary Guards, searched her house and confiscated her personal belongings including her books, laptop, tablet and mobile phone before they put her in a car, blindfolded her and took her to Evin Prison. She was then held for the first five days in solitary confinement before being transferred to a cell shared with another detainee, Ghoncheh Ghavami, in Section 2A of Evin Prison, which is under the control of the Revolutionary Guards. She was held for another 10 days in solitary confinement after she started a hunger strike in protest at her detention.

In a media interview in December 2014, Atena Farghadani said that she had been interrogated for nine hours every day for a month and a half after her arrest. She said that her interrogators questioned her about meeting with families of those killed during the protests that followed the disputed 2009 presidential election. She was also questioned about a cartoon that she had drawn and posted on her Facebook page.

The authorities also brought the charge of “gathering and colluding with anti-revolutionary individuals and deviant sects” against Atena Farghadani for her art exhibition, named “Parandegan-e Khak” (Birds of earth) which referred to those killed in the aftermath of the 2009 disputed election and was attended by relatives of political prisoners as well as members of the Baha’i community.

Atena Farghadani started a “wet” hunger strike on 1 October 2014 after she discovered that the authorities intended to continue her detention despite the end of early investigations. After 11 days of hunger strike, she stopped taking water in addition to food (“dry” hunger strike). Atena Farghadani was released on 6 November on a high bail. Her family were allowed to visit her for the first time after over two months following her arrest and just two days before her release.

On 28 December 2014, Atena Farghadani released a video message on YouTube in which she described how she was ill-treated in prison. In this video, she said that during her detention, in order to be able to paint, she flattened and used the paper cups in which she was given milk. However, the prison guards confiscated her paintings and stopped giving her paper cups after they discovered that she had been using them for painting. As a result, on 17 October she hid in her clothes a couple of paper cups that she had found in the bathroom and took them to her cell. According to the video message, female prison guards went to her cell and asked her to strip naked for a body search while swearing and using insulting language. When she resisted the search, she said in her video message that the guards subjected her to beatings which resulted in her sustaining a bruised wrist and scratches on her chest. She said that the guards had learned about her taking the cups because they had installed cameras in the toilet and bathroom facilities. The prison officials apparently had told the detainees that the cameras were not operating.

Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iran is a party, provides that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. Detention is considered arbitrary when a person is deprived of their liberty because they have exercised the rights and freedoms guaranteed in the ICCPR. Detention may also become arbitrary as a result of violation of the detainee’s fair trial rights, including the rights to access legal counsel before trial, to be brought promptly before a judge, to challenge the lawfulness of detention and to have adequate time and facilities to prepare a defence. There is a presumption of release pending trial and detainees are entitled to compensation if they are held unlawfully.

The UN Minimum Rules on the Treatment of Prisoners states that prisoners should be in accommodations with other prisoners who have been “selected as being suitable to associate with one another”.

PLEASE CHECK WITH THE INDIVIDUALS AT RISK PROGRAMME AT AIUK BEFORE SENDING APPEALS AFTER 10 APRIL 2015

Individuals at Risk Programme, Amnesty International UK, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA, 0207 033 1572, iar@amnesty.org.uk.