

Mr. Abdul Haq Wasiq
Director of Intelligence
General Directorate of Intelligence
Chaharahi Zanbaq
Kabul, Afghanistan

Dear Mr. Abdul Haq Wasiq,

I am writing to express grave concern over the arbitrary arrests and detentions of prominent women human rights defenders Parisa Azada, Neda Parwani, Zholia Parsi, and Manizha Seddiqi in Afghanistan. These women have been arbitrarily detained simply for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Neda and Zholia were arrested together with members of their families.

Zholia Parsi, a leading activist for women and girls' rights and founder of the Spontaneous Movement of Afghan Women, was arrested and detained along with her son. Neda Parwani, a woman human rights defender and popular Youtuber, was arrested with her husband and their four-year-old son. Manizha Seddiqi, a woman human rights defender and member of the Spontaneous Movement of Afghan Women, was forcibly disappeared and found weeks later in the custody of the Taliban. Parisa Azada, a member of the Afghanistan Women's Movement for Justice and Freedom, has also been arbitrarily arrested and detained in an undisclosed location.

Amnesty International's findings indicate that these women protesters are deprived of family visits and lack access to lawyers, as well as access to their medical needs.

I am also deeply concerned that they are 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.

These arrests contravene international human rights law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Afghanistan is a state party. They clearly violate the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. I therefore call on you to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release Parisa Azada, Manizha Seddiqi, Zholia Parsi, and Neda Parwani, and any of their family members also held in detention.
- Pending their release, I urge you to ensure their detention conditions meet international standards, and that they are provided with access to lawyers and are able to 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,