

URGENT ACTION

EDUCATION ACTIVISTS ARBITRARILY DETAINED

On October 17, 2023, Ahmad Fahim Azimi and Seddiqullah Afghan, two activists working with the education organization, Fekre Behtar, were arbitrarily arrested at their office in Karta Char, Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. They are accused of working against the Taliban de-facto authorities. After being held for 72 days for interrogation in the GDI District 40, they were trialed on December 27, 2023, and subsequently sent to Pul-e-Charkhi prison. Ahmad Fahim Azimi and Seddiqullah Afghan's arrest and arbitrary detention are against international human rights law. They must be immediately and unconditionally released.

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
- [Click here](#) to let us know the actions you took on **Urgent Action 9.24**. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Mr. Abdul Haq Wasiq
Director of Intelligence
General Directorate of Intelligence
Chaharahi Zanbaq
Kabul, Afghanistan
X/Twitter: [@Zabehulah_M33](#) / [@GDI1415](#)

No Domestic Postal Address
Email: info@mfa.gov.af
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Dear Mr. Abdul Haq Wasiq,

I am writing to express my concern about the arbitrary arrest and detention of education activists **Ahmad Fahim Azimi** and **Sediqullah Afghan**, who work with Fekre Behtar, an organization which is recognized for its work with the Afghan girls' robotics team.

On October 17, 2023, Ahmad Fahim Azimi and Seddiqullah Afghan were arrested at their office in Karta Char, Kabul and kept for 72 days for interrogation. They were falsely accused of assisting girls from the national robotic team to leave the country, inciting women protestors, and organizing protests. Both men and their families have refuted these allegations. On December 27, 2023, Ahmad Fahim Azimi and Seddiqullah Afghan appeared in a Taliban court in Kabul where the Taliban judge deemed the interrogation findings inconclusive and ordered their transfer to Pul-e-Charkhi prison. Both men challenged the judgement and in retaliation, the authorities subjected the two activists to torture and other ill-treatment, including sleep deprivation and solitary confinement.

I urge you to immediately and unconditionally release Ahmad Fahim Azimi and Seddiqullah Afghan and uphold Afghanistan's obligations imposed under the Convention against Discrimination in Education by immediately allowing girls to receive education on an equal basis with boys. Finally, I urge you to stop the abductions, arbitrary detention, and torture and other ill-treatment of people working to defend human rights, including those peacefully campaigning for the right to education.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ahmad Fahim Azimi and Seddiqullah Afghan are two education activists working with Fekre Behtar organization which is highly recognized for its advocacy for girls' education and its criticism of the Taliban's ban on girls' education. They have worked closely with the Afghan national robotic girls' team in Herat province. Fekre Behtar has been working to carry out educational activities in coordination with existing working legislation and procedures for the past two years offering training for Afghan girls in the fields of languages and robotics.

On October 17, 2023, at 4 pm, the Taliban GDI District 40 special forces entered Fekre Behtar's office and arbitrarily arrested Ahmad Fahim Azimi and Seddiqullah Afghan. Following the arrest, they were transferred to an unknown location. The family of Azimi and Afghan managed to find out their whereabouts only after 27 days. During the arrest, the Taliban intelligence seized six laptops, Azimi and Afghan's passports, cash, flash drives containing study materials, the work permit of the organization, as well as other information related to the teachers and students.

Ahmad Fahim Azimi and Seddiqullah Afghan were held in the GDI District 40 detention center for 72 days, allegedly accused of assisting girls from the national robotic team to leave the country, inciting women to protest, and organizing protests. In these 72 days, both activists faced physical and mental torture and other ill-treatment. They were deprived of sleep and kept in solitary confinement. They were not provided access to a lawyer during the interrogation period, nor access to medical support.

On 27 December 2023, after both activists were presented at a Taliban court in Kabul, the judge did not find the interrogation findings satisfactory, and decided to send both activists to Pul-e-Charkhi prison in Kabul. The activists protested the interrogation and the judgement. As a result, they were pressurized to confess in a video that they were working against the Taliban de facto authorities. Both activists refused to give such confession.

When the location of the two activists became known, their family members were allowed to visit them every 15 days. They were allowed to speak via phone in the presence of the Taliban soldiers in both rooms. Since they were sent to Pul-e-Charkhi prison, family visits have not been allowed and thus they do not know the conditions of the two activists in the prison.

Only after the court's decision, the families of the activists managed to engage two defense lawyers, aiming to appeal the Taliban court's ruling and advocate for the release of the two activists. Nonetheless, there's a prevailing concern among the families that these lawyers are facing intimidation, harassment, and risks of detention from the Taliban. This repression and restriction of civic space raise doubts about the ability of the lawyers to effectively bring forth evidence of torture and other ill-treatment, and the unfair trials faced by the activists.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, Dari, Farsi, Pashto, or your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: March 29, 2024

NAME AND PRONOUN: Ahmad Fahim Azimi and Seddiqullah Afghan (both he/him)