

## Press release

### **Rights groups call on UN experts to intervene on behalf of a Kurdish women's rights activist on the seventh anniversary of her arrest on Women's Day**

**London, 8 March 2015** – In a petition filed on 5 March 2015, REDRESS and Justice for Iran have urged the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to intervene on behalf of a female Kurdish activist who is currently serving a life sentence in Iran after she was arrested on International Women's Day seven years ago.

In their petition, the organisations urge the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) to call on the Iranian Government to grant Zeinab Jalalian a re-trial that complies with international standards for fair trial, including disregarding any evidence obtained under torture or other ill-treatment. They also request that she is protected from further torture and ill-treatment and given access to all the necessary medical treatment, including urgent care for a degenerative eye condition that is causing her to lose her sight.

In 2008, Jalalian was sentenced to death for "enmity against God" (moharebeh) by Kermanshah Revolutionary Court for her alleged membership in the Party for Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK), an armed Kurdish opposition group. She was not granted access to a lawyer during her summary trial and was sentenced to death despite the lack of evidence about her participation in the armed activities of the PJAK. Her death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in 2011.

The organisations state that Jalalian was targeted for her social activism and work promoting women's rights in the Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan, where she had been assisting women by providing them education and social services since 2000 until her arrest. One of her last activities took place in an early visit to the Iranian Kurdistan prior to her arrest in March 2008, when she visited a girls' high school in Kamiaran to talk about the importance of International Women's Day and distributed flowers to the students.

Jalalian is currently serving a life sentence in Khoy Prison, western Iran. Prior to being transferred to Khoy Prison in early 2015, Jalalian was held in Dizel Abad Prison, near Kermanshah, where she received inadequate treatment for a series of ailments that her family believe result from the beating she has endured. Before her trial, Jalalian spent eight months in pre-trial detention in a Ministry of Intelligence detention centre, where she says she was subjected to severe torture and ill-treatment to force her to confess to false charges. This included long interrogations while being blindfolded, beatings, flogging under her feet, threats of rape and

solitary confinement. She also says she was tortured during a period of detention in Evin Prison in 2010.

Jalalian suffers from intestinal infections and internal bleeding. She also suffers from conjunctiva, but prison authorities have repeatedly refused to allow her access to an eye specialist outside of the prison to get the required surgical treatment. Her health has deteriorated to a point that she currently needs assistance to perform daily tasks. Her eye condition is reported to be rapidly deteriorating. On 16 June 2014, Amnesty International issued an urgent action calling on the Iranian authorities to give Jalalian the medical treatment she required.

Since Jalalian has been jailed her family has only been able to visit her a few times and has only been allowed to have two-minute telephone conversations with her once a week.

A copy of the Petition has also been submitted to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

A copy of the petition is available here:  
<http://www.redress.org/downloads/150305jalalian-wgad-submission.pdf>

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**About the co-authors of the Petition:**

**REDRESS** is an award winning human rights organisation based in London which works internationally to combat torture by seeking justice and reparation for torture survivors. Since 1992, it has consistently fought for the rights of torture survivors and their families in the UK and abroad. REDRESS has intervened in a range of leading torture cases.

**Justice for Iran (JFI)** is a non-governmental, not-for-profit human rights organization established in July 2010. It aims to give a voice to the voiceless. The mission of JFI is to address and eradicate the practice of impunity that empowers officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran to perpetrate widespread human right violations against their citizens, and to hold them accountable for their actions. JFI unravels the truth and seeks justice for ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTs, women, and those who are persecuted because of their political beliefs. To achieve its mission, JFI researches, documents, validates, and litigates individual cases. It further raises public awareness and participates in human rights advocacy through the UN and the EU.

**About the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention:**

This UN-mandated body of independent human rights experts investigates cases of arbitrary arrest and detention that may be in violation of international human rights law and is currently under the purview of the UN Human Rights Council. After verifying information from a variety of sources, including NGOs, inter-governmental agencies and victims' families, the Working Group issues opinions on the compliance with international law and sends urgent appeals to governments to ascertain the whereabouts and condition of those allegedly detained. It can also conduct fact-finding visits to countries that have extended an invitation to the Working Group.