

HRD+ Statement

On Condemning the Arrest of Nazera Rashidi, a Woman Journalist in Kunduz, Afghanistan

Human Rights Defenders Plus (HRD+) expresses its deep and grave concern and strongly condemns the arrest of Ms. Nazera Rashidi, a committed journalist in Kunduz province, carried out by the Taliban intelligence services. This action constitutes a clear and systematic violation of fundamental freedoms, particularly freedom of expression, freedom of the media, and women's rights in Afghanistan.

According to credible information, Ms. Rashidi was arrested on Tuesday morning at around 8:00 a.m., after receiving a phone call and while leaving her private residence. Local sources confirm that at the time of her arrest she was suffering from poor physical health and that she had previously been subjected to repeated threats and pressure due to her professional media activities.

The arbitrary arrest of Nazera Rashidi is a blatant violation of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the right to seek, receive, and impart information through any media and regardless of frontiers. The suppression of journalists, especially women journalists, represents a direct breach of this fundamental principle.

This action also stands in complete contradiction to Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which rejects any form of coercion, threat, or organized repression that results in the violation of individuals' basic rights. The arrest of journalists for carrying out their professional duties is a clear example of abuse of power and a violation of international obligations.

Furthermore, the Taliban's treatment of Ms. Rashidi constitutes a comprehensive violation of the principles and commitments enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which obliges states to eliminate structural discrimination against women in all spheres, including access to work, freedom of expression, social participation, and personal security. Targeting women journalists reflects entrenched gender discrimination and a systematic effort to erase women from public life.

Human Rights Defenders Plus (HRD+) calls for the immediate, unconditional, and safe release of Ms. Nazera Rashidi and emphasizes that full responsibility for her physical and psychological well-being lies with those who have detained her. We also call for an end to the policy of intimidation, arbitrary arrests, and the suppression of journalists and media, particularly women journalists, in Afghanistan.

We urge civil society organizations, intellectuals, media outlets, academic institutions, and human rights networks inside and outside the country to use all civil, media, and legal means

to advocate for the release of Nazera Rashidi at the national, regional, and international levels, and to ensure that this grave human rights violation does not pass in silence.

Human Rights Defenders Plus (HRD+) specifically calls on Mr. Richard Bennett, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, as well as Ms. Reem Alsalem, United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, and Ms. Irene Khan, United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression, to intervene in this case urgently and effectively, to follow up on the arrest of Nazera Rashidi within official UN mechanisms, and to take action toward her swift release and the cessation of repression against women journalists.

Silence in the face of such cases amounts to the normalization of human rights violations. Defending Nazera Rashidi is a defense of freedom of expression, human dignity, and women's right to be present in society.

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