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Afghanistan: Woman human rights defenders Zahra Mohammadi and Mursal Ayar abducted

On 3 February 2022, woman human rights defender **Zahra Mohammadi** was abducted from her office in Kart-e-Parwan, in Kabul, and detained by the Taliban in an unknown location. On 2 February 2022, another woman human rights defender, **Mursal Ayar**, was similarly taken from her house in Kart-e-Naw district of Kabul. The woman human rights defender's family reported that at least ten armed men, also believed to be the Taliban, entered their house physically assaulting Mursal Ayar and then abducting her. These attacks come within two weeks of the abduction and subsequent disappearance of women human rights defender [Tamana Zaryab Paryani](#), alongside her three sisters and woman human rights defender [Parwana Ibrahimkhel](#), from their respective houses in Kabul.

[Zahra Mohammadi](#) is a member of the Afghan Women's Solidarity Team, which had organized an indoor protest to demand the release of Tamana Zaryab Paryani and Parwana Ibrahimkhel on 2 February 2022. A dentist by profession, she has been peacefully advocating for women's rights to work and to education, since the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban in August 2021. Even in the face of violent suppression of human rights, freedom of expression and dissent, she participated in many peaceful protests in Kabul, demanding equal rights for women.

[Mursal Ayar](#) is a woman human rights defender and a journalist working with CNN. She has also been advocating for women rights and has participated in several protests in Kabul.

The women human rights defenders are facing reprisals for their peaceful resistance against the Taliban. At the recently held Oslo Summit, women representatives from Afghanistan had raised serious concerns regarding the deteriorating situation for women's rights in the country and the grave reprisals faced by those who spoke out against the Taliban. They had also expressed outrage at the arrest and disappearance of Tamana Zaryab Paryani and Parwana Ibrahimkhel and had asked for their immediate release.

On 23 January 2022, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid [claimed](#) that the Taliban have the right to arrest and detain dissidents. Since their takeover of Kabul in August 2021, the Taliban have engaged in serious human rights abuses including arrests, detention and torture of human rights defenders, conducting raids on civil society organizations, banning the rights of women to education and work, beating protestors, and reportedly torturing or killing activists, journalists, minorities, and former government officials.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the abduction and subsequent disappearance of women human rights defenders Zahra Mohammadi and Mursal Ayar. It believes that the women human rights defenders are being attacked for defending the rights of women in Afghanistan and participating in peaceful protests against the Taliban. Front Line Defenders is also concerned about the continued disappearance of Parwana Ibrahimkhel, Tamana Zaryab Paryani and her three sisters, who were abducted from their homes on 19 January 2022.

Front Line Defenders calls on the international community to demand that the Taliban immediately release the women human rights defenders and end all forms of harassment against them. The international community must also acknowledge the severe and ongoing human rights violations in Afghanistan, and hold the Taliban accountable for their targeting of human rights defenders.

Front Line Defenders respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw attention to Article 6 (b and c): *“Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others: (b) As provided for in human rights and other applicable international instruments, freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms; (c) To study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters”*, and to Article 12 (1 and 2): *“(1) Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. (2) The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.”*

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Anderson

Executive Director