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Commissioner for Human Rights
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Human rights situation in Iran, the case of Mina Khajavi

Dear Mrs Mijatovic,

I am writing to you in my position as a member of the Hamburg Parliament and spokesperson for the Green Party in the Hamburg Parliament on health policy to draw your attention to the current situation of Mina Khajavi, a 60 year old women, who is imprisoned in Iran.

I have taken over the political sponsorship for Mina Khajavi and would like to urge you to stand up for her, as I am very concerned about her health and because I see her imprisonment as a serious violation of human rights. By imprisoning Mina Khajavi, the Iranian government is violating the human right to freedom of worship.

Mina Khajavi is a converted Christian and was arrested on June 30, 2020 together with other Christians during a raid on her home church. A short time later, on July 20, 2020, she was temporarily released on bail of the equivalent of 1,500 US dollars. When she was arrested, Mina was blindfolded so that she did not know which prison she was in. And when she was released, she was also blindfolded, put in a car and dropped off somewhere on a street in Tehran. She had no cell phone with her and was unable to contact her family.

On October 16, 2021, she was then summoned to the Tehran Public Prosecutor's Office and finally sentenced to 6 years in prison on May 29, 2022 by Judge Iman Afshari of the 26th Branch of the Tehran Revolutionary Court for "acting against national security by promoting 'Zionist' Christianity". She did not have to serve the sentence immediately because she was hit by a car. Her ankle was broken in the accident and was fitted with metal plates. Mina Khajavi walks with a limp and has since developed arthritis.

On January 3, 2024, she was informed that she would have to present herself at Evin Prison within five days to begin her prison sentence. She has been imprisoned in Evin Prison ever since.

As a doctor, I have to assume that Mina's health has deteriorated considerably since then, as the prison conditions in Evin Prison are characterized by abuse, violence and torture. It is questionable whether Mina Khajavi can survive for several years under these conditions. As she is also in urgent need of medical treatment, her detention is undoubtedly a strong violation of human rights.

Mina Khajavi was arrested solely because of her religious affiliation to Christianity. The Iranian leadership is thus violating Article 18 of the "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights", which Iran has ratified and which is intended to guarantee freedom of religion. An appeal against the conviction was not possible.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the 10 countries in the world with the highest level of persecution of Christians. It is known that the numerically largest Christian community in Iran are converts from Islam such as Mina Khajavi. They are not recognized by the state and are massively persecuted by the regime. Converts are not allowed to gather in churches, but are forced to meet secretly in private homes, so-called house churches, to hold services. These house churches are regularly spied on and stormed by the secret service and the Revolutionary Guard. Their members are arrested and, like Mina Khajavi, sentenced to long prison terms. In addition to imprisonment, other methods of punishment are also used, such as flogging or forced labor.

Many of those affected claim to have been forced to take part in "Islamic retraining". They were filmed in the presence of the secret service with the aim of developing new charges against them from their statements. After their release from prison, the discrimination continues. Many report that they were dismissed from their jobs, often under pressure from the secret service. Family members are also put under pressure. Due to the massive intimidation, many of those affected do not speak publicly about their fate. The Islamic Republic threatens the victims with imprisonment and even physical violence against them and their families in order to silence them.

As a Christian in Iran, Mina Khajavi is subjected to arbitrariness and deprivation of rights because she has practiced her Christian faith. I ask you to advocate for her immediate unconditional release from prison. I would like to ask you to inform me about the current developments, prison conditions and the state of health of Mina Khajavi.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dr. Axel Steiner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.