

ACTION BY CHRISTIANS AGAINST TORTURE

26 JUNE 2024

**NIGHT OF THE WATCHERS
(NUIT DES VEILLEURS)**



ACAT France has organised this year's annual Night of the Watchers (Nuit des Veilleurs) for 26 June 2024. The theme is 'Thanks to Christ, life has conquered death', which is reflected in the online materials (spiritual readings, prayers etc) available online (at <https://nuitdesveilleurs.fr/fr/>), although you may need to use Google's online translation tool for an English translation. This 19th year of the vigil also marks the 50th anniversary of ACAT, bringing together Christians from all over the world and supporters of all generations, committed to the defence of human rights. You are invited to send greetings and/or short messages of hope and encouragement to the prisoners. The messages can be religious and you may mention ACAT-UK if you wish.

Please send a message to Saïda El Alami, Morocco.



Saïda El Alami is a 49-year-old human rights defender and member of the collective 'Moroccan Women Against Political Detention'. She describes herself as a 'political dissident' on Facebook. Her group has denounced the actions and corruption of the security services and the judiciary, and showed its support for prisoners of conscience such as journalists Omar Radi and Soulaymane Raissouni.

On 23 March 2022 she was summoned by the National Judicial Police Brigade following comments made on social media the day before, where she criticized Abdellatif Hammouchi, head of the General Directorate of National Security (equivalent to the national police) and the General Directorate of Territorial Surveillance (domestic intelligence) for sending agents to investigate her. She was charged with 'contempt of a body regulated by law', 'insulting public officials in the performance of their duties', 'disregarding judicial decisions' and 'disseminating and distributing false allegations

without agreement'. Denied access to a lawyer during her 48-hour detention and during the first 10 days of her detention, she was sentenced on 29 April 2022 by the Court of First Instance of Casablanca to two years in prison and a fine of 5,000 dirhams (about €500). During the appeal phase, she went on hunger strike, protesting against her arbitrary detention and refusal to bring her to the hearings. On 21 September, the appeal court increased her sentence to three years. She is currently being held at Oukacha Local Prison in Casablanca.

On 25 May she was sentenced in a second case to two years (later reduced to 8 months) and fined 2,000 dirhams (about €200) for 'insulting the king' and 'insulting a magistrate or a public official in the performance of their duties'. Her lawyers intend to ask for the merger of his two sentences, without guarantees, as the legal proceedings are still ongoing.

Saïda has reported health problems and believes she was being spied on in her cell via a concealed camera. She has also been held in solitary confinement since the beginning of her detention and is allowed only half an hour a day out of her cell, which is a violation of the rules of minimum international standards of detention and may be considered torture. Despite these difficult circumstances, she remains in good spirits and unwavering in her commitment to the battles she is fighting. After attacking independent journalists, the Moroccan government is now focusing its attacks on human rights defenders and other political opponents. Saïda is currently being held at: Prison Oukacha Aïn Sebaâ, Casablanca, 20000 Morocco.

You can write to Saïda El Alami via her lawyer at:

Saïda El Alami

C/o Maître Souad Brahma

Action NDV 2024

4, Boulevard Mohamed V, Résidence Al Mahatta, Appartement 42

26100 Berrechid

MOROCCO



Please send a message to Zeynab Jalalian, Iran



Zeynab Jalalian is the longest-serving prisoner of conscience in Iran and is the only political prisoner to have been sentenced to life imprisonment for her work on behalf of Kurdish women and girls. Born in 1982, she was arrested in February 2008.

During her detention, she was subjected to torture, verbal and physical abuse, as well as threats of blackmail and sexual violence. After a speedy trial she was sentenced to death for Moharebeh (enmity against God) by the Revolutionary Court of Kermanshah for her 'armed action against the Islamic Republic, membership of the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan, possession of weapons and propaganda activities in favour of anti-state groups'.

Zeynab Jalalian has always denied carrying out any armed actions. In October 2011 Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei commuted her sentence to life in prison (probably 10-15 years). Her defence maintains that the evidence presented by the intelligence services was unfounded, and that she should have a new trial.

Zeynab Jalalian suffers from several diseases, including vision problems, asthma, kidney and digestive problems, all exacerbated by the widespread abuse, harsh conditions of detention and lack of adequate care. Since her arrest she has been transferred from prison to prison. Due to the remoteness and restrictions imposed by the security services, she has not been able to receive visits from her family for several years. Her phone calls are limited to once a week and only to her parents.

Intelligence officers at Yazd prison warned the prisoner that if information about her health condition was leaked to the media by her and her family, she could be transferred again. In March 2022 security forces detained her parents and three brothers for 24 hours after a video of her mother talking about her daughter's health in prison was released. His family has been threatened with reprisals.

In 2016 the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention recognised the arbitrary nature of her detention and called on the Islamic Republic of Iran to immediately release Zeynab Jalalian and to take all necessary measures to compensate her for the harm she suffered, in accordance with international law.

You can write to her via the following address:

Zeynab Jalalian
C/o KMMK-G/Taimoor Aliassi
Action NDV 2024
21, rue Antoine-Carteret
1202 Geneva
SWITZERLAND



Please send a message to Wu Xianle, China



As a former military man and member of the Chinese Communist Party, Wu Xianle was considered a potential rival by President Xi Jinping. He was arrested on 26 January 2021 and sentenced a year later to a particularly heavy sentence of 11 years in prison. According to those

close to him, he was mainly targeted because of his sexual orientation, especially since he has been married since 2014 to a Frenchman, a man of Western origin, which is particularly badly regarded by the Chinese authorities.

In 2023, noting that he had unusual health problems as well as injuries when she visited him in detention, his daughter suspected that he had been tortured in prison. The conditions of his detention are contrary to several fundamental rights, including the right to a fair trial. Since then his health has stabilized but he has not regained mobility in his right little finger, does not have access to glasses for his

vision – even though it is deteriorating – nor to the packages that his daughter is trying to send him, which has prevented him from dressing warmly to withstand the sub-zero temperatures of winter.

Wu Xianle's situation illustrates both the trend of hardening repression against homosexuals in China – increasingly documented internationally – and Xi Jinping's disturbing ambition for omnipotence.

You can write to him via the following address:

Wu Xianle
C/o Dupouy-Wu
2 rue Amelot
75011 Paris
FRANCE



Please send a message to Pham Doan Trang, Vietnam



Pham Doan Trang was arbitrarily arrested in October 2020 and sentenced to nine years in prison by the Hanoi People's Court for her work as an independent journalist and human rights defender. She was charged with writing 'crimes' and 'anti-state propaganda.' Her case is symbolic of the treatment of independent journalism in Vietnam, which is now considered a prison country for journalists who do not carry the narrative of the Communist Party. Her work is internationally recognized – she received many prestigious awards, both before and after her arrest – which was an aggravating circumstance in the eyes of the Vietnamese authorities.

As is customary in Vietnam for human rights defenders, especially when they are in the media, Pham Doan Trang did not receive a fair trial. Her health deteriorated rapidly in detention, but she has been denied medical care by the prison authorities and is being held in the notorious An Phuoc prison. After she refused to plead guilty, the Hanoi

People's Appeal Court upheld her nine-year sentence. Her mother was unable to attend her trial and appears to be banned from visiting her. Despite strong mobilization from the international community, the journalist is still arbitrarily detained in unclear conditions which are undermining her health.

You can write to her at the following address:

Phạm Đoan Trang
Trại giam An Phước
FQ3J+738, ĐH507, An Thái,
Phú Giáo, Bình Dương,
VIETNAM

Please send a message to Wendy Galarza, Mexico



Wendy Galarza is a women's rights defender and childcare worker who showed exceptional bravery facing the horrors of 9 November 2020 in Cancún, Quintana Roo. On that day Wendy joined feminist collectives to demand justice

for the killing of a woman known as Alexis. Attempting to escape extreme police violence, she was captured, severely beaten and almost died after being shot twice.

Wendy is just one of many people injured as a result of the Quintana Roo police's abuses during the protest. Officers also arbitrarily arrested eight people at Benito Juárez City Hall, and tortured them as punishment for their human rights activities. Two were subjected sexual torture.

Wendy lodged a complaint against the police, but it took months for the State Prosecutor to accept her evidence. Today, the suspects for her shooting have still not been brought to justice. But Wendy did not give up; she set up a collective — the 9N Victims Committee —

with other women who were assaulted during the protest. Those responsible for shooting her have yet to be brought to justice. In Mexico, as well as in several countries in Latin America and elsewhere, women continue to experience violence and femicide rates are increasingly high.

You can write to Wendy Galarza and her colleagues at:

Colegio Kukulcán
Calle ixcun 10 Manzana 3, Supermanzana 32
CP 77508 Cancún,
Quintana Roo
MEXICO



Please send a message to Luisa Muñoz Gonzales and Fernando Romo Salas, Mexico



Luisa Muñoz Gonzales and Fernando Romo Salas are the parents of Luis Romo Muñoz, a 21-year-old who went missing on 19 June 2011 in Chihuahua, Mexico. On that day the Muñoz family gathered to celebrate Father's Day, when gunfire

erupted outside, triggering an altercation with local police, who remained passive in the face of calls for help. Shortly after a group of armed men, posing as members of the federal police, arrived at their home. After beating the men, threatening the women and ransacking the house, they took away the family's father, four of his sons, his son-in-law, his grandson and his nephew, Louis. The eight members of the Muñoz family have disappeared and never returned. No thorough investigation has been carried out and no-one has been brought to justice. The authorities denied any involvement and the judiciary have acknowledged they were incompetent.

Complaints filed by family members were repeatedly dismissed until finally, in 2021, a police officer was implicated. However, since the General Law on Disappearances, which classifies this act as a crime, was not yet in force at the time of the events, the officer has been prosecuted for only minor offences.

In 2022 the organization CEDEHM (Centro de los Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres, or Centre for Women's Human Rights) lodged a legal appeal for any involvement of the authorities to be seriously investigated and for the police officer on trial also to be tried for enforced disappearances. Two years later this appeal has not been successful and the criminal proceedings can no longer move forward. For 13 year Luisa Muñoz Gonzales and Fernando Romo Salas have continued to fight to find their son and seek justice, despite obstacles and pressure from the authorities.

You can write to the family at:

Centro de los Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres (CEDEHM)
Av. Juárez 4107-B Col. Centro
Chihuahua
CP 31000 Colonia Centro Chihuahua
Mexico



Please send a message to Abdul Karim Ali, Cameroon



Abdul Karim Ali is a Cameroonian human rights defender and former director of the Peace Research Centre (CRP). He is arbitrarily detained in Yaoundé's Kondengui Central Prison for denouncing the use of torture by a Cameroonian military officer in the south-west of the country. He was arrested by gendarmes, without a warrant, on 11 August 2022 in the Ntamulung neighbourhood of Bamenda, North-West Region, and subsequently detained at the local gendarmerie. In violation of the law, he was held in police custody for 84 days – several of them incommunicado – in a six-square-metre cell, without windows, toilet or mattresses, along with 12 other detainees. For several days, he was deprived of food and water. While no official reason was provided for his detention, he was questioned about a video recorded on 9 July 2022 and posted on social media, in which he accused a Cameroonian military officer of torturing civilians.

In early November 2022 Abdul Karim Ali was transferred to the notorious Central Judicial Research Service (SCRJ) of the Secretariat of State for Defence (SED) in Yaoundé, where detainees are routinely tortured during interrogation. On 7 November 2022 he was brought for the first time before the Yaoundé Military Court, a non-independent judicial body that should try only military personnel, not civilians, under international law. In January 2023 Abdul Karim Ali was transferred to Kondengui Central Prison, also in Yaoundé.

In March 2023, after spending more than 200 days in detention without charge, in violation of Cameroonian law and international human rights standards, Abdul Karim Ali was formally charged with 'hostilities against the homeland, secession, failure to declare and rebellion'. Since then, he has appeared several times before the investigating judge of the military court, but his trial has not

progressed as there is no evidence to support the charges against him. Possessing videos of soldiers committing human rights violations is neither a crime nor a misdemeanour, nor is publicly denouncing such acts and calling for justice. His ongoing trial before the military court in Yaoundé serves only to punish his activities as a human rights defender.

You can write to Abdul Karim Ali him via the following address:

L'ACAT France
7 rue Georges Lardennois
75019 Paris
FRANCE



