



**CARTOONISTS
RIGHTS**



**Freedom
Cartoonists**
DESSINS POUR LA LIBERTÉ



Following widespread press reports of the arrest and detention of Iranian artist, activist and cartoonist Atena Farghadani in Tehran on June 7th 2023, CARTOONISTS RIGHTS, Cartooning For Peace, and the FREEDOM CARTOONISTS Foundation call for prosecutors in the Islamic Republic of Iran to drop the charges of “disturbing public order” and release Ms Farghadani immediately.

According to her lawyer, Mohammad Moghimi: “Since her release in 2016¹, intelligence and security agents have harassed her many times, including prevention from employment, tapping her phone and disturbing her private life. These cases have caused her to protest against the agencies responsible and that has become the basis for her detention.”

It was Mr Moghimi who on June 8th and via Twitter confirmed her arrest after a summons to the courthouse at Evin Prison. The next day he further stated: “A bail in the amount of [\$4,200] has been issued for my client Atena Farghadani, and she refused to accept the bail with the argument that she has not committed a crime and that her summons and charges are illegal and arbitrary, and for this reason, she was transferred to [the Qarchak Prison for women, outside Tehran].

From a trusted source we have learned the charges articulated so far relate to disturbance of the public order. After an absence of some three years and three months, Ms Farghadani took to her Instagram account last week and prior to her court summons had posted images of a new coloured pencil drawing. Despite much speculation online, at this time we have no reason to believe she was arrested because of this social media post.

Ms Farghadani was awarded the Courage in Cartooning Award by Cartoonists Rights in 2015, after a 2014 drawing posted to Facebook and depicting parliamentarians as animals, an objection to laws restricting women’s reproductive choices, led to a series of criminal charges including “spreading propaganda against the system”, “insulting members of parliament through paintings”, “gathering and colluding against national security”, “insulting the President”, and “insulting prison officials”.

After eighteen months in prison, all sentences were commuted or reduced, save one; over the following four years of her life Farghadani could have gone to prison again at any time under a suspended sentence of “insulting the Iranian Supreme Leader”.

¹ <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/iran-atenafarghadani-released-free-imprisoned-art-political-cartoons>

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Whilst a prisoner Ms Farghadani was severely abused and subjected to virginity and pregnancy tests against her will, practices that are designated torture by international human rights standards. She spent a period on hunger strike and suffered a heart attack. After a handshake between herself and Mr Moghimi she faced additional criminal charges of “illicit sexual relations falling short of adultery”.

Hence, now that the same authorities have Ms Farghadani in custody again, there is good cause to fear escalation and further charges to come, as well as dire mistreatment.

In our view, Atena Farghadani is a prisoner of conscience, there is no justification for her detention, and we demand her immediate and unconditional release.

**cartooningforpeace.org
cartoonistsrights.org
freedomcartoonists.com**