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Mr. Abdul Haq Wasiq
Director of Intelligence
General Directorate of Intelligence
Chaharahi Zanbaq
Kabul
Afghanistan

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Dear Mr. Abdul Haq Wasiq,

**I am writing to express my concern about the arbitrary arrest and detention of filmmaker Sayed Rahim Saidi.**

On 14 July 2024, Sayed Rahim Saidi and his son were arbitrarily arrested by members of the Taliban’s General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) District 40 from Khoshal Khan Meena, District 5 of Kabul. At the time of arrest, four Taliban GDI soldiers with covered faces surrounded them. Without explanation or showing official arrest warrant, they covered Saidi’s and his son’s faces with black cloths and took them to GDI District 40. His son was released after an interrogation; however, Saidi was kept in GDI for further interrogation. He was then accused of spreading propaganda against the Taliban de facto authorities, a charge based on his past films as well as a new film he was planning to work on addressing the ban on girls’ education by the Taliban. On 19 December 2024, the filmmaker was unfairly tried at the Taliban court in Kabul, without access to a defence lawyer. The Taliban judge accused him of propaganda against the Taliban de facto authorities and forced him to accept the charges or face a second trial where his imprisonment would very likely be prolonged. Deprived of a fair trial, in absence of de-fence lawyer and fear of extended imprisonment period, Saidi accepted the verdict. Since his arrest, Saidi has been seriously ill with lumbar disc herniation and prostate issues, without access to adequate healthcare or the medicine he needs. His family is extremely concerned about his health conditions.

Saidi’s situation shows a clear violation of the rights to freedom of expression under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and fair trial rights guaranteed in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Afghanistan is a state party.

I therefore urge you to:

* **Immediately and unconditionally release Sayed Rahim Saidi.**
* **Pending his release, he must be granted immediate access to lawyers and adequate healthcare, and he must be held in conditions that meet international standards for the treatment of prisoners and protected from torture and other ill-treatment.**
* **Stop the practices of arbitrary detention, and torture and other ill-treatment of people working to defend human rights including those peacefully promoting social change and non-discrimination.**

Yours sincerely,

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