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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 journalist Mahdi Ansari.**

On 5 October 2024, Mahdi Ansari was arbitrarily arrested by members of the Taliban’s General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) District 40 near his office in Dasht-e-Barchi area, western part of Kabul. At the time of arrest, Taliban GDI soldiers surrounded him and without an explanation or providing an official arrest warrant, took him to GDI District 40. The Taliban alleged that Mahdi Ansari disseminated anti-regime materials, claiming they possess «substantial evidence». He was subsequently accused of propaganda against the Taliban de facto authorities, a charge based on his past work as a journalist in which he had reported on the first anniversary of a deadly suicide attack on Kabul’s Shia minority and commemorated the second anniversary of this attack on his Facebook. During his interrogation and detention, he was subjected to ill-treatment including being kept in solitary confinement. His mental health has also severely deteriorated.

On 1 January 2025, Mahdi Ansari was unfairly tried at the Taliban court in Kabul, without access to a defence lawyer and in absence of his family. The Taliban judge accused him of propaganda against the Taliban de facto authorities, referring to his past reports and peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression. He was sentenced to one and half years in prison. Mahdi Ansari is still being held in the GDI 40, where his family, only permitted to visit him after one month of his detention, are now allowed to visit him only once a week where they can talk only for five to six minutes via telephone through a glass window.

Mahdi Ansari’s detention and conviction is in clear violation of his rights to freedom of expression and fair trial guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Afghanistan is a state party.

I therefore urge you to:

**• Immediately and unconditionally release Mahdi Ansari;**

**• Ensure that, until his release, he is held in conditions meeting international standards and has regular access to adequate healthcare, legal representation, and family visits;**

**• 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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