

What has befallen me?! By Alhan Taefi-May 21st, 2009



**Editor's Note:** Fariba Kamalabadi (Taefi) is one of the seven former Baha'i leaders, previously known as the Yaran ["Friends" in Iran]. She has been imprisoned for over a year at the notorious Evin prison in Tehran and a profile of her can be read here: <http://www.iranpresswatch.org/2009/02/profiles/>. Mrs. Kamalabadi has three children: Alhan, Taraneh, and Vargha. The following letter was written on the one-year anniversary of her arrest and detention.

### **What has befallen me?!**

Today marks one whole year that you have not been with me – now I want to express my feelings of pain and anguish during this year; a year of untold stories; a year of solitude; a year of being far from a mother!

It was this very same day last year, when I was woken up early in the morning by a phone call – a call which gave me the dreaded news that government intelligence agents had raided your home. Before I had a chance to collect myself and realize what had happened and what I must do, I received an S.M.S. from my little sister, Taraneh, saying: “they are taking away Mom; if you want to see her, come fast”! Oh my, what has befallen me?! Even after a whole year, still – remembering that moment brings pain and agony to my heart, and I can't help but shed uncontrollable tears.

In a state of shock and disbelief, I rushed to your house, worried about what if I got there late and they had taken you already... then, when would I ever see you again!?

Finally I got there, and frantically climbed the long flight of stairs, skipping every other step, and rushed into your home. Thank God! You were still there... I was with you for a short while, and then... you were leaving. I hugged you with all my might, squeezed you, kissed you, and told you how proud I was of you. And you left... for an unknown period of time! I knew that you would not return home anytime soon, but I never thought that a year would pass and you would still be there!

You left me and I was alone... with a mountain-load of pain and sorrow. I was so dependent on you... was so in need of your advice, even on very small matters! Who knows what has befallen me during this period!?! Even now, remembering the extent of my sorrow and grief makes me tremble.

I was so used to speaking with you every single day, even if it was just for one minute. For a whole 80 days after your arrest, I did not have any communication with you... and when after 80 days you called me and I did not recognize your voice, how ashamed I was of myself! I remember your words very vividly – saying “my dear, didn't you recognize my voice?”... And I, full of happiness, melancholy, excitement, and tons of other opposing sentiments all at the same time, could not utter a word.

Oh my God, what has befallen me during this past year!?! I remember in preparation for Mothers Day, when all my friends were talking about what presents they were going to

buy for their moms, I forced myself not to burst into tears, in order to be strong... the same way you wanted me to be... the same way you are.

When on your birthday I could not give you a present; I kept myself happy only with memories of you...

When, in your absence, and because of your absence, I experienced the worst day of my life, the day I felt my heart was crumpled – I went out walking alone, burst into tears, and sent you this text message: “Oh Mom, I am so lonely and hapless without you!”, knowing full well that this text message would never reach you.

Oh my, what has befallen me?! Whenever I encountered the worst of my difficulties during this past year, and you were not there to rush to my aid... when my eyes came across your things, knowing that at one time you had used these things; I would heave a sigh from the very depths of my being.

What befell me the day I saw that you had become so tiny, so slender and wiry, the time when I held your hand in my hands and saw that your hand was trembling out of sheer frailty?! How much I struggled to control myself not to burst into tears in your presence! What befell me that day, at the end of my visit with you in your prison, behind the isolated visiting room, when they were lowering the curtain, you bent down to be able to see us until the very last moment of our visit, to wave at us and to smile at us...? Oh God, how much the thought that it might very well be the very last time I would be able to see you tortured me.

When, on my birthday, you gave me a pair of stockings which you had bought from the prison store, as a present – the best thing that one could buy from there – how delighted, yet how grieved I became! How hard I embraced it, kissed it, and decided never to wear it, so it wouldn't wear out! That day reminded me of my previous year's birthday, when you, in spite of a severe back ache, arranged for my birthday party... and the thought of this made my heart ache.

How delighted I was looking at the carrot plant – a plant you had grown in your prison-cell, which you gave as a present to my little sister, Taraneh, on her birthday! This plant stood for me as a symbol of you. When I was lonely, I would go and cuddle it, talk to it, caress it, and kiss it – I would feel it was you standing before me. How sorrowful and grief-stricken I became when it withered! I would rush to tie its tiny branches together with a green ribbon – perchance it would be revived again – as if I was taking care of you.

What a day it was for me on the festival of Ridvan [the Persian New Year], when you gave me a gift – I felt I had been given the whole world, and I showed off my gift to all my friends with utter pride.

What a night it was for me... the night I could not go to sleep – I started reading all the e-mails you had previously sent me, as tears poured down my cheeks, and how much I wished to receive just one more e-mail from you again.

All of these memories as well as hundreds of days have come to pass, each carrying myriads of large and small, good and bad recollections of my experience – yet God knows that during this whole year I never wished, if it was not His Will, for you to return home to us... I always whispered this poem to myself:

“I would not relinquish my pain for You in vain...

-will not give up my love for the Beloved till slain.

My keepsake from my Beloved is my pain...

-would not trade for a myriad cures this pain.” (Rumi)

This is what befell me over the past year; God only knows what befell you, dear Mom!!!