

30 October 2020

## **Croatia: Pressure on family member of migrant rights defender Tajana Tadić**

On 5 November 2020, the appeal hearing into the case of the partner of migrant rights defender **Tajana Tadić**, is scheduled to take place at the Administrative Court of Zagreb. The appeal concerns a decision issued by the Ministry of Interior on 11 May 2020 to revoke his refugee status, which was granted in 2018.

Tajana Tadić is a program manager with Are You Syrious (AYS), a human rights organisation created in 2015 in Croatia supporting migrants on the Balkan migration route. AYS provides migrants with legal aid and psycho-social support, runs integration programs for children and adults, produces reports and analysis denouncing violent pushbacks and other illegal practices by the authorities, and contributes to the reshaping of policies through advocacy work. AYS is part of the Border Violence Monitoring Network, which in January 2020, published its first annual report alleging torture of asylum seekers by Croatian authorities at EU external borders.

Her partner is an Iraqi citizen who arrived in Croatia on 26 April 2017 and was granted refugee status on 7 September 2018. The pair met at AYS during his asylum application process. He has been volunteering with AYS, assisting asylum seekers with translation and taking part in the educational and integration programs of the NGO.

On 5 November 2020, the Administrative Court of Zagreb will deliver a decision on the appeal of Tajana Tadić's partner against the revocation of his refugee status. The Ministry of Interior initially revoked his refugee status on 11 May 2020 on allegations that he represents a "threat to national security". Neither he nor his attorney have been given access to a part of his file which has been classified as "secret", after the Ministry of Interior objected to their requests.

Tajana Tadić's partner has been harassed by police on multiple occasions in relation to the woman human rights defender's activities for the protection of migrant rights. On 9 October 2019, he received a phone call summoning him to the police station at Petrinjska Street No. 30 for an interview allegedly concerning "the register of persons who have entered the Republic of Croatia". On 10 October 2019, he arrived to the police station where he was questioned, among other things, about his relationship with Tajana Tadić, people who he met in the Centre for Asylum Seekers, as well as some people he's not acquainted with. In addition, content on his mobile phone was checked by a police officer, without a warrant. During the interview, he was asked by a police officer to meet informally at a cafe and was told that he should help police by providing them with information about other refugees. When he refused, the police officer reportedly started to threaten him with revocation of his refugee status, and deportation to Iraq. Following the interrogation, the police officer confiscated his residence permit despite the fact that such an action was illegal, and returned it only after Tajana Tadić's intervention.

AYS and Tajana Tadić have been targeted by Croatian authorities since 2018, when the Minister of the Interior, Davor Božinović, sent a written reply to Member of Parliament Peđa Grbin to his question about the circumstances surrounding the death of Madina Hussiny, a six-year old Afghan girl, at the Croatia-Serbia border. In the letter, the Minister accused AYS of encouraging illegal migration to Croatia. The statement by Minister Božinović was reported by numerous media, seriously damaging the reputation of the NGO. Not long after its publication, AYS was subjected to judicial harassment, where the Ministry of Interior implicitly sought to ban the work of AYS association.

In 2018, AYS were been subjected to several instances of police harassment, police questioning of staff members and beneficiaries and vandalism of its premises. On 17 April 2018, the evening before a press conference hosted by AYS and the Centre for Peace Studies on police pressure and intimidation, police officers arrived at the private address of Tajana Tadić's parents. They summoned Tadić to an interview with officers from the Croatian National Police Office for Suppression of Corruption and Organised Crime scheduled to take place at the same time as the press conference. The interview was linked to a case filed by Madina Hussiny's family against unidentified perpetrators in the ranks of the Croatian police, accusing them of death by negligence.

Front Line Defenders believes that the revocation of Tajana Tadić's partner's refugee status may be in retaliation for her peaceful and legitimate human rights work. Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the apparant lack of a safe and enabling environment for migrant rights defenders in Croatia, who face judicial harassment and stigmatisation for their legitimate human rights activities.

**Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Croatia to:**

1. Immediately reverse the revokation of the refugee status of Tajana Tadić's partner, as it is believed to be linked to his connection with the migrant rights defenders movement in Croatia;
2. Take measures to ensure that government officials or other public figures refrain from making statements or declaration stigmatising the legitimate work of human rights defenders;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Croatia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.

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