

libertas

RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY'S NEWSLETTER

SPECIAL EDITION

Akbar Ganji is Rights & Democracy's 2007 John Humphrey Freedom Award recipient for his tireless and non-violent efforts to expose the human rights abuses being committed by Iran's fundamentalist regime.

JOHN HUMPHREY FREEDOM AWARD 2007

PROFILE OF AKBAR GANJI

BORN ON JANUARY 28, 1960 in Tehran, Akbar Ganji is a celebrated Iranian journalist and writer. His work has appeared in pro-democracy newspapers across Iran, most of which the government has since shut down. He has written 10 books, including the bestselling *The Dungeon of Ghosts* (1999) and *The Red Eminence and The Grey Eminence* (2000).

Initially enthusiastic about the 1979 Revolution, Ganji became a member of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corp and worked at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. After becoming disillusioned with the regime, he turned to journalism and became increasingly critical of the regime's suppression of human rights.

After becoming disillusioned with the regime, he turned to journalism and became increasingly critical of the regime's suppression of human rights.

In April 2000, Mr. Ganji was sentenced to six years in Tehran's notorious Evin prison on charges of "propaganda against the regime and its institutions." The charges stemmed from a series of investigative articles exposing the complicity of then President Rafsanjani and other leading members of the conservative clergy in the murders of political dissidents and intellectuals in 1998. During his time in jail, Mr. Ganji endured solitary confinement and a hunger strike that lasted from May to August 2005. He also continued to write, producing a series of influential political manifestos and open letters calling for Iran's secularization and the establishment of democracy through mass civil disobedience. The works were smuggled out of Evin and widely distributed, particularly on the Internet. He was released on March 18, 2006. *l*

AKBAR GANJI ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN IRAN

IRAN'S DISPUTE with the West has totally deflected the world's attention from the intolerable conditions that the Iranian regime has created for Iranians. The world should not forget that although the 1979 revolution of Iran was a popular revolution, it did not lead to the formation of a democratic system that protects human rights. The Islamic Republic is a fundamentalist state that represses civil society and violates human rights. Thousands of political prisoners were executed during the first decade after the revolution without fair trials or due process of the law, and dozens of dissidents and activists were assassinated during the second decade.

Independent newspapers are constantly banned and journalists sent to prison. News Web sites are filtered and books are either refused publication permits or censored before publication.

When women demand equal rights, they are accused of acting against national security, subjected to various types of intimidation and endure various penalties, including long prison terms. In the first decade of the 21st century, stoning (torture leading to death) is one of the sentences that Iranians face on the basis of existing laws.

A number of Iranian teachers, who took part in peaceful civil protests over their pay and work conditions, have been dismissed from their jobs. Some have even been jailed or sent into internal exile in far-flung regions. Iranian

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Rights & Democracy
International Centre for Human Rights
and Democratic Development

Rights & Democracy is an independent, non-partisan Canadian institution created by an Act of Parliament in 1988. It has an international mandate to promote, advocate and defend the democratic and human rights set out in the International Bill of Human Rights. In cooperation with civil society and governments in Canada and abroad, Rights & Democracy initiates and supports programmes to strengthen laws and democratic institutions, principally in developing countries.



MESSAGE FROM THE ACTING PRESIDENT

RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY'S 2007 John Humphrey Freedom Award recipient speaks to the kind of courage this Award was established to celebrate. Mr. Akbar Ganji's courage and commitment to freedom of speech and democratic development has come at great personal risk. He has endured imprisonment, torture, hunger strikes and solitary confinement in his struggle to promote human rights and democracy in Iran. And yet, he continues tirelessly to denounce the human rights violations occurring in his country under the fundamentalist regime.

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi, who visited our offices in October 2004, knows too well the harassment of Iran's despots. Only an international outcry kept her organization open after Iranian officials declared her Centre for Defense of Human Rights (CDHR) an illegal organization.

Mr. Akbar Ganji's courage and commitment to freedom of speech and democratic development has come at great personal risk.

Through this Award and cross-Canada speaking tour, Rights & Democracy honours the work of Akbar Ganji and his fellow activists in Iran who struggle in a very difficult and hostile climate. We hope that this Award not only sheds light on the human rights violations occurring in Iran but also provides some small measure of protection so that when Mr. Ganji returns to Iran he will not be sent back to the notorious Evin Prison.

We urge the international community and particularly the UN to ensure Iran upholds its international obligations as signatory to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We also call on Canada to continue its pressure by once again putting forward a UN resolution denouncing Iran's failure to comply with human rights norms. *ℓ*

Janice Stein

JANICE STEIN

AKBAR GANJI CALLS ON INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO CONDEMN HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN IRAN

In an open letter to the United Nations in September 2007, Iranian human rights activist and dissident journalist Akbar Ganji urged the world to condemn the Iranian regime's human rights violations and opposed any military attack on Iran. He also called on UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to act immediately to ensure all of "Iran's political prisoners, who are facing more deplorable conditions with every passing day, be released." His letter was endorsed by 300 prominent writers, Nobel laureates and academics from around the world, including Canadians Naomi Klein, John Ralston Saul and Charles Taylor.

Akbar Ganji, the 2007 John Humphrey Freedom Award winner, suggested that the best way to foster democracy in the Middle East is to promote "a just peace between Palestinians and Israelis and pave the way for the creation of a truly independent Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel." He added that a possible attack on Iran over its uranium enrichment program would make "things extremely difficult for Iranian human rights and pro-democracy activists." In his view, the "dismemberment of Middle Eastern countries will fuel widespread and prolonged conflict in the region," and such violence would be detrimental to human rights and democratic development. For Mr. Ganji, national struggles for human rights and democracy are inexorably tied to regional dynamics in the Middle East. *ℓ*

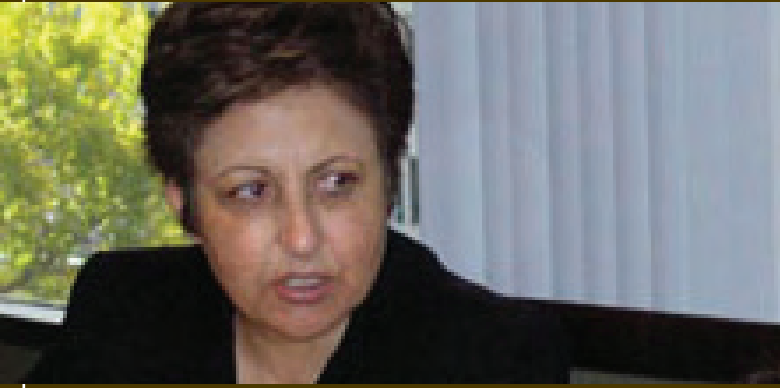
JOHN HUMPHREY FREEDOM AWARD

Rights & Democracy presents the John Humphrey Freedom Award each year to an organization or individual from any country or region of the world for exceptional achievement in the promotion of human rights and democratic development. The Award consists of a speaking tour of Canadian cities to help increase awareness of the recipient's human rights work. It is named in honour of the Canadian John Peters Humphrey, a human rights law professor who prepared the first draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Previous Winners

- 1992** – Instituto de Defensa Legal (Peru)
- 1993** – La Plate-forme des organismes haïtiens de défense des droits humains (Haïti).
- 1994** – Campaign for Democracy (Nigeria) and Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (Egypt)
- 1995** – Bishop Carlos F. X. Belo (East Timor)
- 1996** – Sultana Kamal (Bangladesh)
- 1997** – Father Javier Giraldo (Colombia)
- 1998** – Palden Gyatso (Tibet)
- 1999** – Cynthia Maung and Min Ko Naing (Burma)
- 2000** – Reverend Timothy Njoya (Kenya)
- 2001** – Sima Samar (Afghanistan)
- 2002** – Ayesha Imam (Nigeria)
- 2003** – Kimy Pernía Domicó (Colombia) and Angélica Mendoza de Ascarza (Peru)
- 2004** – Godeliève Mukasarasi (Rwanda)
- 2005** – Yan Christian Warinussy (West Papua)
- 2006** – Su Su Nway (Burma)

Shirin Ebadi is an Iranian lawyer and winner of the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize for her human rights and democratic development efforts. She became Iran's first female judge in 1975 but was forced to resign after the 1979 revolution. She works for the rights of women, journalists, and others who lack power under the Iranian regime. She co-founded the Association for Support of Children's Rights in 1995 and the Centre for Defense of Human Rights (CDHR) in 2001 and became known outside Iran for her clashes with the country's rulers. Her books include *The Rights of the Child* (1993), *Tradition and Modernity* (1995) and *Women's Rights in the Laws of the Islamic Republic of Iran* (2002).



SHIRIN EBADI ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN IRAN*

There are two kinds of violence against women in Iran: the kind that the law does not recognize and the kind that it does. Violence that is not recognized by law includes acts committed in the name of culture and custom (such as crimes of honour, particularly in small cities). Recognized violence, although condemned by law, still occurs.

In the East, and more particularly in Iran, men have a great deal of freedom, whereas the slightest lapse by a woman will not be forgiven. There is a case of a brother who killed his sister that received a great deal of media attention. However, it was two years before the family made a complaint and initiated the required procedures. If crimes of honour were brought before the courts, the man would be punished. However, as long as the victim's family does not take steps to ask for a trial, the guilty party will be able to avoid sentencing. Domestic violence, although condemned by law, goes on all the same. Battered women have no place to go for shelter in the event of domestic violence. Moreover, if a man kills his wife because of adultery, he will be pardoned (legal killing of women).

Violations of women's rights are obvious in Iranian law. For example, a man may have four wives at the same time. In court, two women are equal to one man. Following a car accident, the compensation paid in the event of a man's death is twice that paid for the death of a woman. In addition, the legal marriage age for girls is thirteen and for boys, fifteen. The age of legal responsibility for girls is nine and for boys, fifteen. This means that if she committed an offence, a little girl of ten would be punished as if she were an adult woman. Although women have fewer rights than men, they have greater responsibilities. At the same time, women have a higher level of education and cannot accept these discriminatory laws. This is why feminism is becoming very popular in Iran.

Women's rights are important because they serve as an indicator of the human rights situation in a country. Democracy and women's rights are two sides of the same coin. Is it even possible to think of a democratic country that violates women's rights? In democratic countries, even if their rights are not always respected, women are equal to men before the law.

Sources of Discrimination against Women

There are those who believe that discrimination against women is rooted in Islam. However, given that the status of women is not necessarily better in, for example, Christian African countries, the explanation must lie elsewhere—a patriarchal antidemocratic culture that oppresses women, a culture that is not based on the equality of human beings.

The fight for democracy and human rights requires an understanding of cultural values. Only when the structure of oppression is understood can it be fought; in this case, patriarchal culture is the real enemy. Although women are the victims of patriarchy, men who violate the rights of women were raised by women. Patriarchy is like hemophilia—women cannot develop it, but they can pass it on. We must therefore fight against cultural values that violate women's rights. *ℓ*

*Excerpt from Shirin Ebadi's presentation at Rights & Democracy in October 2004. Please note that this is a loose translation of her ideas as expressed in Farsi.

Whenever women protest and ask for their rights, they are silenced with the argument that the laws are justified under Islam. It is an unfounded argument. It is not Islam at fault, but rather the patriarchal culture that uses its own interpretations to justify whatever it wants.





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AKBAR GANJI ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN IRAN

workers are deprived of the right to establish independent unions. Workers who ask to be allowed to form unions are beaten and imprisoned.

Iranian university students have paid the highest costs in recent years in defence of liberty, human rights, and democracy. Security organizations prevent young people who are critical of the official state orthodoxy from gaining admission into university, and those who do make it through the rigorous ideological and political vetting process have no right to engage in peaceful protest against government policies. If students' activities displease the governing elites, they are summarily expelled from university and in many instances jailed. The Islamic Republic has also been expelling dissident professors from universities for about a quarter of a century.

In the Islamic Republic's prisons, opponents are forced to confess to crimes that they have not committed and to express remorse. These confessions, which have been extracted by force, are then broadcast on the state media in a manner reminiscent of Stalinist show-trials. There are no fair, competitive elections in Iran; instead, elections are stage-managed and rigged. And even people who find their way into parliament and into the executive branch of government have no powers or resources to alter the status quo. All the legal and extra-legal powers are in the hands of Iran's top leader, who rules like a despotic sultan.

In Iran, political dissidents, human rights activists and pro-democracy campaigners have been killed on the basis of Article 226 of the Islamic Penal Law and Note 2 of Paragraph E of Section B of Article 295 of the same law, which allows for a person to unilaterally decide that another human being has forfeited the right to life and kill them in the name of performing one's religious duty to rid society of vice. In such circumstances, no dissident or activist has a right to life in Iran, because, on the basis of Islamic jurisprudence and the laws of the Islamic Republic, the definition of those who have forfeited the right to life (*mahduroldam*) is very broad.

In Iran, writers are lawfully banned from writing on the basis of Note 2 of Paragraph 8 of Article 9 of the Press Law, which states writers who are convicted of "propaganda against the ruling system" are deprived for life of "the right to all press activity". In recent years, many writers and journalists have been convicted of propaganda against the ruling system. The court's verdicts make it clear that any criticism of state bodies is deemed to be propaganda against the ruling system. *ℓ*

IRAN AT A GLANCE

POPULATION: 71,200,000 (2007)

LIFE EXPECTANCY: 71 years (2005)

REGIME: Islamic Republic

LAST ELECTIONS: Presidential elections: June 17 and 24, 2005. The ultra-conservative mayor of Tehran and former member of the Pasdaran Guards (Revolutionary Guards), Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was elected president. Over 1000 candidates were disqualified by the Council of Guardians.

LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS: February 20 and May 7, 2004, characterized by the prior invalidation of several thousands of candidates (including those of over one-quarter of sitting parliamentarians) by the Council of Guardians. The next legislative elections will be held in March 2008.

LEGAL VOTING AGE: 15

YEAR WOMEN RECEIVED RIGHT TO VOTE: 1963

YEAR WOMEN RECEIVED RIGHT TO STAND FOR ELECTION: 1963

SEATS IN PARLIAMENT HELD BY WOMEN
(% of total): 4.1%

INTERNET USERS (per 1000 people in 1990/2003): 0 / 82

FREEDOM OF PRESS INDICATOR
(ranking among 168 countries): 162

GROSS NATIONAL INCOME PER CAPITA
(US\$, 2005): 2770

HUMAN POVERTY INDEX (out of 102 countries): 35

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX (out of 177 countries): 96
(medium, upward trend)

GENDER-RELATED DEVELOPMENT INDEX
(out of 177 countries): 74

DEATH PENALTY: Iran is the world's second worst offender after China with 177 executions in 2006.

POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

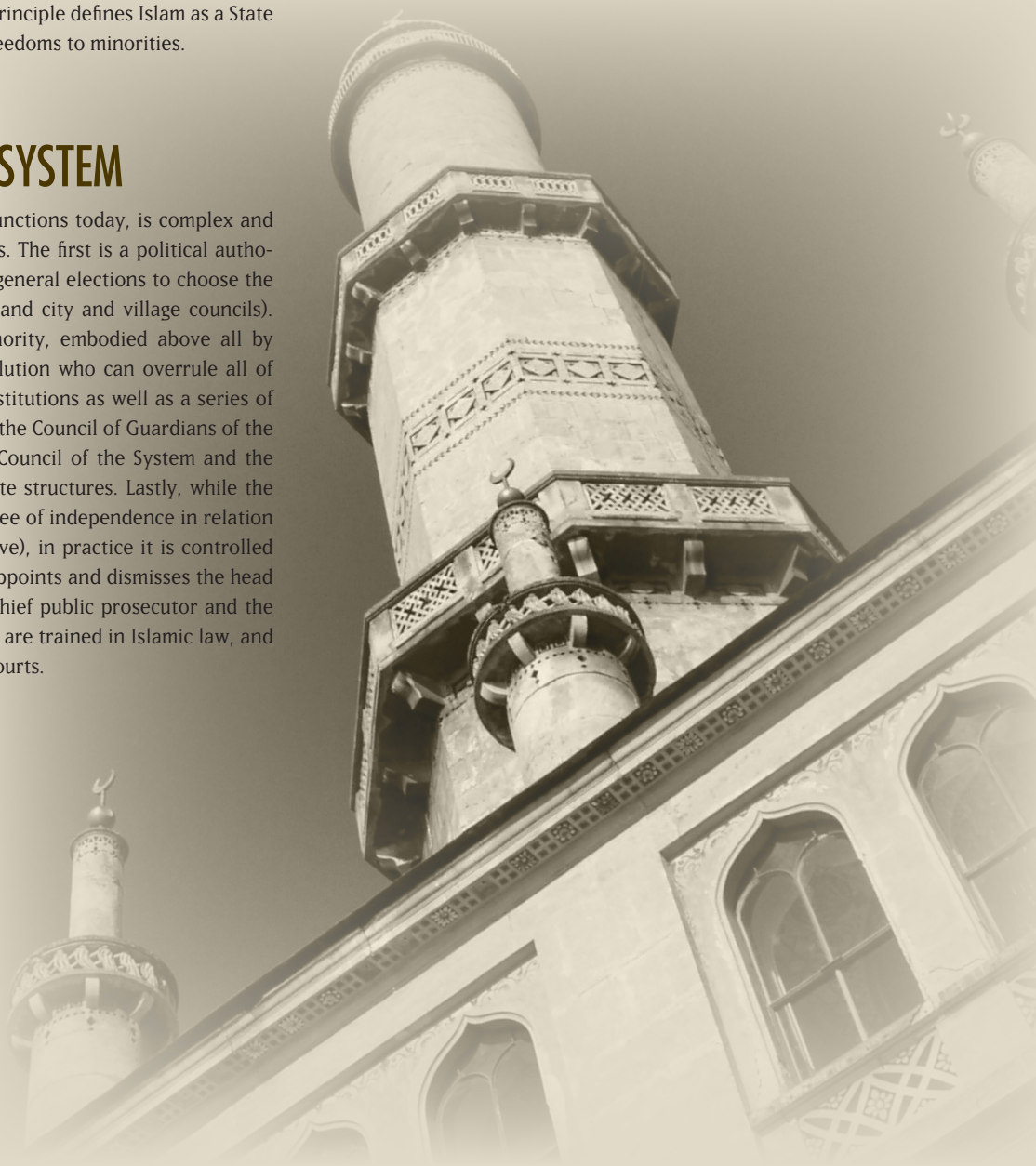
For over 2,500 years, Iran (known as Persia until 1935) has been governed by an absolute monarchy. A modern system of government emerged in Iran after the 1905-1911 Constitutional Revolution. Since then, the country has had two constitutions. The first in 1906 was amended four times (1925, 1949, 1957 and 1967) and established on paper a constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament divided into two chambers (National Assembly and Senate). From 1925 to 1978, under the reign of the Pahlavi dynasty, Iranian law was modernized and a series of codes (civil, criminal, commercial and family) was developed based on the Western model of rights (particularly the Napoleonic Code). However, in reality, Iran was far from a democracy under the Pahlavi regime, which systematically abused human rights, especially those of its political opponents. The second constitution was adopted in December 1979, following the Islamic Revolution, which brought an end to the Pahlavi reign. The new Constitution, amended in July 1989, introduced an Islamic Republic and suspended the application of laws that did not conform to religious principles. Its fourth principle subordinates all civil, criminal, financial, economic, cultural, political or military legislation to religious principles defined by the clergy. Its twelfth principle defines Islam as a State religion, while according certain religious freedoms to minorities.

IRAN'S INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM

The Iranian institutional framework, as it functions today, is complex and unique in its combination of two authorities. The first is a political authority, elected by universal suffrage (through general elections to choose the President of the Republic, the Parliament, and city and village councils). The second is a theocratic (religious) authority, embodied above all by the unelected Supreme Leader of the Revolution who can overrule all of the political, judicial, military and media institutions as well as a series of institutional supervisory structures, such as the Council of Guardians of the Constitution, the Expediency Discernment Council of the System and the Assembly of Experts, and other parallel State structures. Lastly, while the Constitution grants the judiciary a high degree of independence in relation to other authorities (executive and legislative), in practice it is controlled by the Head of State. The Supreme Leader appoints and dismisses the head of the judiciary, who in turn appoints the chief public prosecutor and the head of the Supreme Court. All of the judges are trained in Islamic law, and members of the clergy control most of the courts.

POLITICAL LIFE IN IRAN

Islamist factions have a hold on political life, shutting out other political parties. There are two dominant poles among Islamists: the conservatives, who hold executive power and are the guardians of the revolution, and the reformists, who are more flexible and open in their political approach. Both of these political forces wish to maintain the current system, but do not agree on the methods to achieve this. The reformists—driven by a majority youth population thirsty for greater openness to the world, and the growing desire of Iranians to live in a more economically and politically open society—are in favour of greater political freedom and the emergence of a less dogmatic society where religion does not control all aspects of political power. The conservatives reject such change and are against all openings that might weaken their hold on power. Since the last legislative elections in 2004, the conservatives have been in control of the Iranian parliament. There is a growing popular resistance in Iran against the regime and its repressive and often ruinous policies. ¹





CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION : IRAN'S STUDENT MOVEMENT

BY IRANIAN JOURNALIST AND AUTHOR NASRIN ALAVI*

It is no secret that most of the rulers in the Middle East are out of synch with their youth, and Iranians are no exception. The gap was recently detectable in contrasting responses in Iran to the address by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at Columbia University's World Leaders Forum on September 24, 2007. While it was pronounced as a "triumphant address" across much of the ruling hierarchy and its media, a voice of dissent came from the Iranian student union, Tahkim Vahdat, which published an open letter to the President stating, "Your thoughtless unconsidered words have been at a great cost to the nation." The letter also asked why the president insisted on opening to debate the "massacre of Jews in the second world war, which is a bitter undeniable truth."

Ahmadinejad's taste for public speaking took him to Tehran University on October 8, 2007 to deliver a speech before the start of the academic year. The audience was hand-picked, but outside the hall dissenting students were again on the scene to confront him. The protesters, who had been denied access to the auditorium, chanted "death to the dictator" and held banners demanding: "We have questions too, why only Columbia?" Their protest was dispersed with the heavy-handed help of riot police and the Basij militia.

44 student groups have been closed down, more than 130 student publications have been banned, more than 70 members of the union have been arrested and there are virtually no remaining student bodies in the universities that are critical of the government

During the early days of the Iranian revolution of 1979, Ahmadinejad was a member of Tahkim Vahdat. The nation's largest student union was formed after a decree by Ayatollah Khomeini urging the expulsion of liberal and leftwing student groups from campuses. However, a quarter of a century later, Tahkim Vahdat has become one of the most vocal critics of the regime. The authorities continue to crush protests. In June 2003, which saw 10 days of student protests, Iranian government officials admitted to having arrested 4,000 people.

The repression takes yet other forms. A state strategy, referred to by student activists as a "second cultural revolution", has seen numerous academic staff sacked or forced into early retirement, and dissident students summoned to court, expelled or arrested. Student publications have been closed down, long-established student groups banned and student election results nullified.

Yet while some of the youth of Iran's neighbours may dream of replacing the dictatorships they live under with Islamic states, the Iranians have been there, done that, got the apparel, and suffered the drawbacks. While some Arab US allies such as Jordan ban free elections arguing that they would produce "fanatics", the children of the Iranian Revolution, in contrast, are no longer allowed free elections on campus, as in recent years they have continually elected pro-democracy student leaders.

Yet Tahkim Vahdat's letter to the Iranian president, published on the eve of Ahmadinejad's speech at Tehran University, highlights its increased isolation by pointing out that since his election "44 student groups have been closed down, more than 130 student publications have been banned, more than 70 members of the union have been arrested and there are virtually no remaining student bodies in the universities of the land that are critical of the government. So where is the manifestation of this freedom of speech in Iran that you talked of in Columbia?"

In 2004, in parliamentary elections that paved the way to the victory of Ahmadinejad, an unelected constitutional body had barred 3,600 candidates from standing. Among this number, along with 87 other elected MPs, was Ali Akbar Mousavi Khoini head of the Alumni of Tahkim Vahdat, who was held in solitary confinement for over five months last year. On March 7, 2004 he had said in his final parliamentary speech, "We have witnessed a parliamentary coup ... no longer will there be letters of protest, or voices that reveal the forbidden truth concerning those that have been terrorized, or voices that highlight the killings of freethinkers or the onslaught of the army against the students or the solitary confinement of students, journalists and political activists." Adding that, "nothing but genuine reform from within will keep this regime alive."

With reformists out of office, the newfound sense of confidence of the Iranian authorities is also reinforced by America's difficulties with Iran's neighbours to the west and east, Iraq and Afghanistan. After the ousting of the Taliban in November 2001, a sardonic comment circulated widely in Iran: "At least next year we will be able to emigrate to and find jobs in Afghanistan." Today, however, it is the 1.8 million Afghan refugees who continue to seek work and refuge in Iran, rather than the other way around; any illusion that the United States, the world's superpower, could through the barrel of the gun liberate a nation and magically bring forth prosperity, democracy and peace have been shattered.

In addition threats of an attack against Iran have naturally further burdened many activists inside the country. Last year on December 6, despite the government's crackdown, an extraordinary crowd of students participating in an event called "university is alive" broke down the gates of and demonstrated inside the main campus of Tehran University.

But those applauding such demonstrators for their bravery in standing up to the authorities should not jump to the wrong conclusions. One of the student leaders of the Tehran protest was rapturously cheered by the crowd for saying: "Our struggle is twofold: against internal oppression and external foreign threats." These young people are not waiting to be liberated by invading soldiers, but would unite behind their oppressors in the face of foreign aggression. *ℓ*

*Nasrin Alavi is a journalist and author of *We Are Iran* (Raincoast Books 2005).

UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VISITS IRAN

On September 3, 2007, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Louise Arbour, attended the Non-Aligned Movement ministerial meeting on human rights and cultural diversity in Tehran. While in Tehran, Ms. Arbour met with Iranian officials and urged them to impose a moratorium on the execution of minors and to ensure the right to peaceful public expression. She also met with several human rights activists, including Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Shirin Ebadi and members of a women's rights campaign, entitled One Million Signatures, who aim to gather one million signatures against discriminatory laws that violate women's rights. For more information on this campaign and to sign the petition, please visit www.weforchange.info/english.

CANADA-IRAN RELATIONS

Canadian political relations with Iran have been governed by a policy of controlled engagement. Canada has expressed concern about the human rights situation in Iran and, in particular, such problems as the independence of the judiciary, arbitrary detention, freedom of expression, treatment of women and of persons belonging to religious and ethnic minorities.

Since 2003, Canada has been working with like-minded partners to table a resolution on the situation of human rights in Iran at the UN General Assembly. The adoption of these resolutions by the UN's most inclusive body demonstrates the international community's serious concern regarding the human rights situation in Iran.

On May 17, 2005, a tightening of Canada's controlled engagement policy was announced. Official contacts between Canada and the Islamic Republic of Iran are now limited to three subjects: 1) the human rights situation in Iran, 2) Iran's nuclear program and its lack of respect for its non-proliferation obligations and, 3) the case of Mrs. Zahra Kazemi who was killed in an Iranian prison by regime officials in 2003.

Bilateral trade has averaged \$350M per year since 2002. Crude oil accounts for more than 95% of Canadian imports from Iran. The remaining 5% consists of carpets, dried fruits and nuts. Canadian exports to the Islamic Republic of Iran come from the agricultural and pharmaceutical sectors, engineering and the oil and gas industry.

On December 23, 2006, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution demanding the Islamic Republic of Iran suspend its uranium enrichment program or face sanctions. Since the Islamic Republic of Iran did not conform to this obligation, in early 2007 Canada devised new regulations* to impose an embargo on certain goods and services that could contribute to Iran's activities linked to enrichment, reprocessing, heavy water or the development of nuclear weapons delivery systems; they also address an assets freeze and a travel notification requirement. *ℓ*

*Under the UN Act: the Regulations Implementing the United Nations Resolution on Iran. See: www.international.gc.ca/middle_east/iran_relations-en.asp

IRAN: RATIFICATION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS TREATIES

International Human Rights Treaties	Signature	Ratification
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	April 4, 1968	June 24, 1975
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	April 4, 1968	June 24, 1975
Optional Protocol to the ICCPR	Not signed	
Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, aimed at the abolition of the death penalty	Not signed	
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	March 8, 1967	August 9, 1968
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	Not signed	
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	Not signed	
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	Not signed	
Convention on the Rights of the Child	September 5, 1991	July 13, 1994





IRANIAN CINEMA

HIDE YOUR WORDS, directed by Behnam Behzadi, is a documentary about the plight of young girls in Iran and the reality of arranged marriages.

EXECUTION OF A TEENAGE GIRL, produced by Arash Sahami, is an undercover documentary about Atefeh Sahaaleh, a 16-year old girl who was hanged in a public square in Iran in 2004 for "crimes against chastity."

SILENCE BETWEEN TWO THOUGHTS, directed by Babak Payami, tells the story of an executioner who begins to doubt his own blind faith.

Bahman Fahmanara's film **A HOUSE BUILT ON WATER** won six awards at Iran's film festival but after its premiere, the authorities demanded numerous cuts and deleted three scenes.

RESIDENT EXILE is the story of a young man's struggle with the Shah of Iran's regime.

Director Diana Ferrero's short documentary on the hijab issue, **THEY CALL ME MUSLIM**, focuses on two women, Samah in France and Kay X. in Tehran.

Conditions in a women's prison in Iran are the subject of **WOMEN'S PRISON** (Zendan-e Zanan) directed by Manijeh Hekmat. ℓ

MINORS ON DEATH ROW IN IRAN

Vancouver singer/songwriter and former Miss World Canada, Nazanin Afshin-Jam, continues her campaign to draw attention to gender discrimination and the execution of children in Iran. Afshin-Jam collected more than 350,000 signatures on her online petition earlier this year to help free Nazanin Fatehi from death row.



Iran is the only country in the world that "officially" executes children. According to the United Nations, a child is a person under the age of 18. Despite the fact that Iran has signed International Covenants that forbid them to execute anyone who has allegedly committed an offence before the age of 18, they continue to do so.

Article 6.5 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) declares: "Sentence of death shall not be imposed for crimes committed by persons below eighteen years of age" and Article 37(a) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provides that: "Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment without possibility of release shall be imposed for offenses committed by persons below eighteen years of age."

Since 1990, Amnesty International has recorded 24 executions of child offenders and over the last couple of years the rate is increasing. Currently, there are at least 80 minors on death row in Iran. ℓ



@ SELECTED INTERNET RESOURCES

- Amnesty International
thereport.amnesty.org/eng/Regions/Middle-East-and-North-Africa/Iran
- Human Rights Watch
hrw.org/doc/?t=mideast&c=iran
- PEN Canada
www.pencanada.ca
- Reporters Without Borders
www.rsf.org

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