

CENSORSHIP PROCEDURES IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

JULY 2016



مرکز اسناد حقوق بشر ایران

IRAN HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTATION CENTER

Censorship And Oversight On Books

(As Described By Aliasghar Ramezanzpour)



Aliasghar Ramezanzpour Is A Journalist. He Served As The Head Of The Cultural Affairs Department Within The Ministry Of Culture And Islamic Guidance (Mocaig).

Reviewing the Content of Books by the MOCAIG

Review of books is performed on a contractual basis. The MOCAIG Guidance does not have dedicated staff for reviewing books.

Books are given to experts in various fields for review.

The reviewer does not have the authority to make the decision on whether a book should be published or not.

Each reviewer writes down what he or she thinks about the book in a special form.



In Iranian year 1393 (March 21, 2014 – March 20, 2015) 72,000 books were registered at the MOCAIG. About 15,000 of those were reviewed. The rest did not need to be reviewed because they were of an educational or scientific nature. Fewer than five hundred books were denied publishing permits.



During my time we would only send books to be reviewed if they were of a sensitive nature. But books that were not about sensitive topics (about 70 to 80% of books) were given to Book Office employees for review.



If the Book Review Council was not able to reach a decision about a book it would refer the matter to the General Director of the Book Office in the MOCAIG.



The Book Review Council made decisions about 90% of books. This Council would not discuss whether the author was right or wrong.



At the Book Review Council the issues raised by the reviewer were considered. If they concluded that the points raised by the reviewer were defensible in court as being legal, the Book Review Council would agree with the publication of the book in question.



This form was given to the Book Review Council in the Book Office. The decision whether to publish a book was taken there.

An example of latest instances of censorship:

Mohammad Selgi, an official with the MOCAIG, has stated that according to the Ministry the word "wine" should not appear in any form in a book.

An example of complaints regarding the content of books:

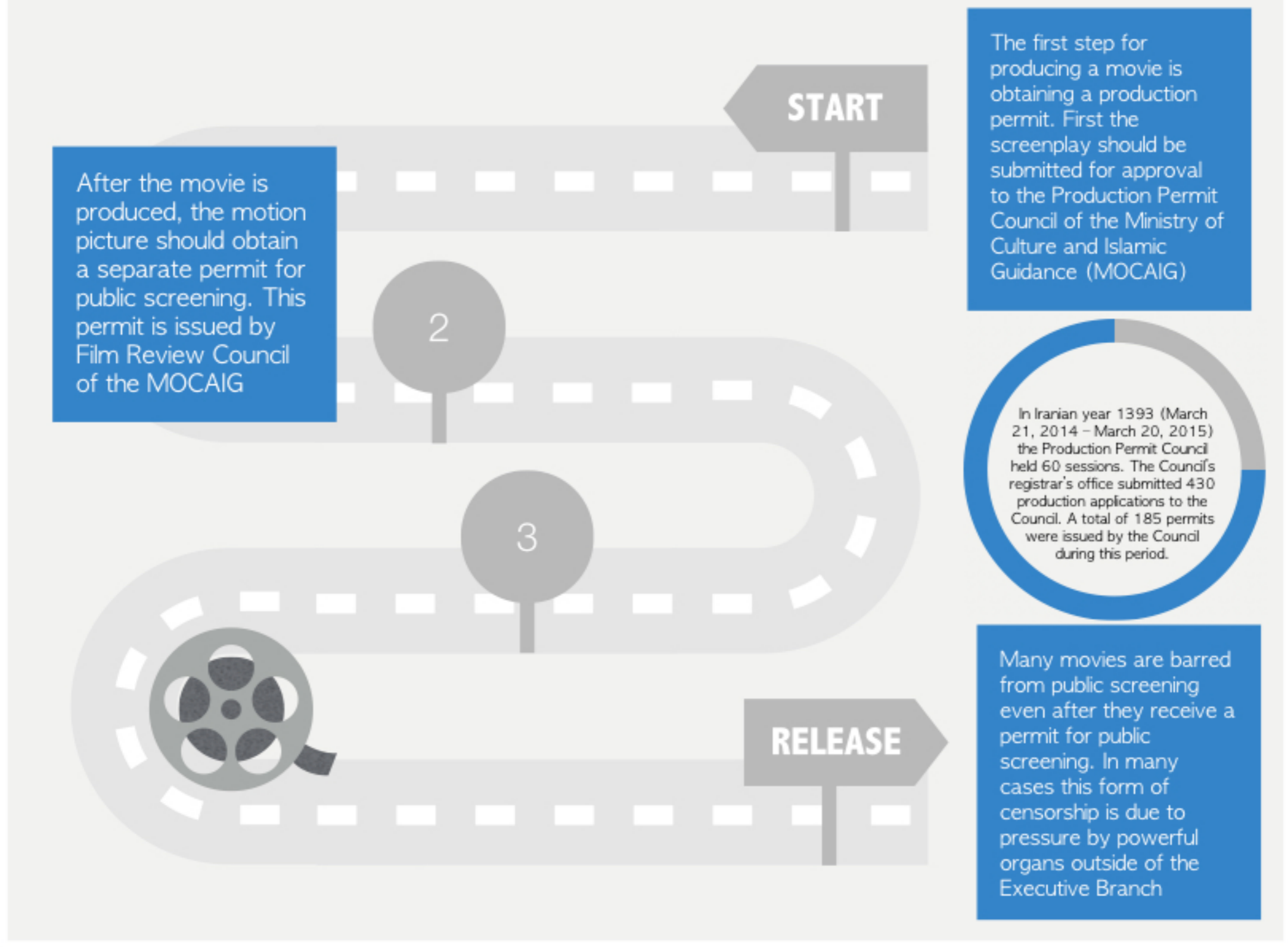
There was a high school biology study guide; this kind of book does not need to be reviewed because the author and the publisher were known. It had obtained a permit and it was published.

Later on we received a letter about this book from the Revolutionary Court. In this book it was said that white blood cells act as defenders of the body in the same manner as security agents, that red blood cells destroy the enemy like the police and the military, and that the brain leads them.

They said that this book was offending security agents, the police, the military, and the Supreme Leader. I went to court and explained that this was not what the author had meant. This case took two years, and I went to the Revolutionary Court several times. Eventually the book was cleared of those charges.



Process of making movies in Iran



Film Review Council of the MOCAIG



This Council has nine members. Of its current nine members, three are directors, one has a doctorate degree in movie and theater, one is a former member of the parliament, two are former government officials, and two are clerics



In 2016, after *Fifty Kilos of Sour Cherries* was shown in movie theaters in Tehran it was banned in other cities. Ali Jannati, Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, stated, "*Fifty Kilos of Sour Cherries* was not suitable at all. If I knew what this movie was about I would not have allowed its production and public screening." He added, "This film promotes disintegration and demise of the family and it provides an inappropriate example through inappropriate make-up [of actresses]; therefore, I am personally opposed to public screening of this movie."

This movie is about a woman named Iran who has lost her husband, son and other family members during the Iranian Revolution, the Iran-Iraq War, and other events. This movie has not received a permit for public screening.

A Hundred Years Better than these Years

I'm not Angry

This movie is about a university student who has been expelled for political reasons and is trying to find a suitable job so that he can marry the girl he loves

This movie is about a woman whose house temporarily protects a number of protesters during the days after the disputed 2009 presidential election.

Lovable Garbage

EXAMPLES OF BANNED MOVIES IN RECENT YEARS

Father's Home

This movie is centered on an honor killing. After being shown during the Fajr Film Festival it did not receive a permit for further public screening.

This movie depicts an imaginary country, but events such as disappearance of statues and production of nuclear energy in private residences point to Iran. In this imaginary country the police engages in murder and creates a sense of insecurity. This movie was screened at the Fajr Film Festival but it was subsequently banned.

Calm Streets

Reward

This movie is about a government official who goes on pilgrimage, where the plot gets complicated. This movie was first banned during the administration of President Ahmadinejad. During Rouhani's administration it obtained a permit for a limited screening at the MOCAIG, but it has not received a permit for public screening.

Siamak Ghaderi Is A Journalist And A Blogger. He Was A Journalist At The Islamic Republic News Agency (Irna) Between 1990 And 2010. Ghaderi Was Arrested After The Disputed 2009 Presidential Election, And He Was Subsequently Fired From His Job At Irna. He Was Terminated For Participating In Protests And Reporting On Them, Which Were His Essential Duties As A Journalist.



Dissemination of News through IRNA's Telex

Special Telex:

This port was used to distribute news that were sensitive and their dissemination could have consequences. Labor protests and city riots fell into this category. The Special Telex communicated these types of news to a select group of individuals and institutions, totaling 200 to 300 recipients. The parliament, government ministries, and editors-in-chief of newspapers were among these recipients. Newspaper editors were not allowed to publish these news, however. In other words, the content of news communicated through this telex was for informative purposes only.



Dissemination of News

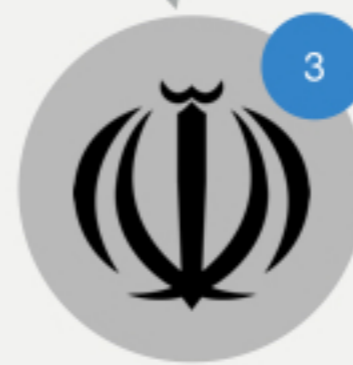


Press Telex:

News that were considered safe to publish were disseminated through this port to print media.

Secret Telex:

This port was used to communicate news that were of a secret nature to a few recipients. At the beginning there were three such recipients: the Supreme Leader, the President, and the speaker of the parliament. Later on the communications of this port were limited to the Supreme Leader and the President.



Supreme National Security Council

External Restrictions on IRNA

Office of the President

Office of the Supreme Leader

"During President Ahmadinejad's administration sometimes we received directives four to five pages long from the Supreme National Security Council with instructions on how to report on 30 to 40 specific items."

"It was not cost-effective for newspapers to generate news. They would get most of their news from IRNA or [the news unit of the state TV and Radio]. The decision regarding what news to publish or not was taken by IRNA."

نمونه اعمال سانسور:

اعتصاب غذای گنجی در زمان احمدی نژاد

An editor signs off on a news item and assigns it to one of the ports

Cycle of Oversight on Dissemination of News

Example of Censorship:

During the July 1999 student protests a group of Ministry of Intelligence (MOI) agents went to IRNA headquarters. They had changed the structure of the news agency. They had set up a small newsroom and taken the computers there. A gentleman who did not know anything about the news business was put in charge as the editor-in-chief. The MOI had taken control since the morning.

That MOI agent told us to be on the streets at the designated time to file reports about the pro-government rally. We were told to use phrases such as "people's presence in the city" and "people's spontaneous turnout." Reporting the news had become like commanded propaganda.

Saeed Biabanaki Is A Poet And An Official With The Office Of Poetry And Song In The Ministry Of Culture And Islamic Guidance (Mocaig)

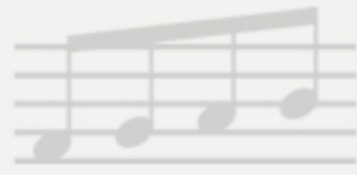


SIX STAGES FOR OBTAINING A PERMIT FOR A MUSIC ALBUM

THE LYRICS SHOULD BE APPROVED BY THE POETRY AND SONG COUNCIL OF THE MOCAIG



THE LYRICS APPROVED BY THE MOCAIG ARE PUT TO MUSIC. THE PRODUCT IS REFERRED TO THE MUSIC OFFICE OF THE MOCAIG



AT THIS STAGE THE NAMES OF THE SONGWRITERS AND PERFORMERS ARE SUBMITTED TO THE INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES FOR A BACKGROUND CHECK



THE PRODUCT IS REGISTERED AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY



THE ALBUM'S COVER PICTURE SHOULD RECEIVE APPROVAL



THE FINAL PRODUCT RECEIVES APPROVAL

