

Doc\_Number: EU000184

The New York Times

**Lens**

PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEO AND VISUAL JOURNALISM

---

AUGUST 12, 2009, 5:30 PM

## Behind the Scenes: Iran Releases Photographer

By *JAMES ESTRIN AND DAVID W. DUNLAP*

Majid Saeedi, an Iranian freelancer for Getty Images who was [arrested a month ago](#) — apparently for taking and transmitting news pictures — has been released from Evin prison on the outskirts of Tehran, Getty executives said Wednesday.

Their relief was tempered by concern, since the charges against Mr. Saeedi have not been dropped.

“We understand that Majid is set to face trial on the charges set by Iranian prosecutors, and is possibly facing several years in prison if convicted,” Jonathan Klein, a co-founder and the chief executive of Getty said in a statement. He called Mr. Saeedi “a diligent and committed photojournalist who documented the reality he observed.”

Joel Simon, executive director of the [Committee to Protect Journalists](#), a nonprofit organization with headquarters in New York, said last Friday, “The charge was something like, ‘He went to such and such place, he photographed what he saw, he sent the images back to Getty by a high-speed line and he was paid for them.’”

“That describes the work of a photographer,” Mr. Simon added. “If that’s a crime, then it’s a crime to be a photojournalist.”

Mr. Saeedi has worked with Getty Images since the devastating earthquake in the ancient city of Bam in 2003. He could always be counted on in news events and had good access to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, said Pancho Bernasconi, director of photography/news at Getty Images.

But it is Mr. Saeedi’s images of everyday Iranian life that distinguish him. “He always tried to give a well-rounded view of his country, not the stereotypical view,” Mr. Bernasconi said.

Mr. Saeedi’s photographs of an Iranian fashion show, along with images of female police enforcing an Islamic dress code, give a nuanced view of Iranian women. His memorable coverage of an annual remembrance of the dead from Iran’s war with Iraq shows the suffering of everyday people.

On May 12, Mr. Saeedi was on hand in Tehran to photograph a very happy journalist: Roxana Saberi, an Iranian-American who had just been released from prison on charges of spying for the United States. Two months later, he himself was imprisoned.

“It’s obviously dangerous,” Mr. Bernasconi said. “There were journalists jailed before him. He knew the potential consequences but decided to put himself at risk to tell the story.”

The perils faced by journalists were made terribly plain earlier Wednesday, when The Associated Press reported that Emilio Morenatti, a highly regarded A.P. photographer, and Andi Jatmiko, a videographer for A.P. Television News, were **badly wounded** when their vehicle ran over a bomb.