

PRESS RELEASE

Iran Human Rights Documentation Center Releases Report: *"Mockery of Justice: The Framing of Siamak Pourzand"*

(New Haven, Connecticut, August 22, 2008) This new report from the IHRDC documents the abduction, arbitrary imprisonment, and trial of Siamak Pourzand, an Iranian journalist in his 70s.

Mr. Pourzand was seized illegally by state officials in November 2001, held in a series of secret detention facilities and then forced to publicly confess to a number of serious offences he had not committed. His case was manufactured and exploited by hard-line conservatives in Iran's clerical establishment to discredit members of the reform movement.

Siamak Pourzand's case sheds much needed light on the parallel state run by the conservative establishment during Iran's short-lived reform era and the power it enjoyed. Mr. Pourzand was vilified in Iran's government-controlled media, imprisoned unlawfully, denied due process, denied a fair trial and forced into self-incrimination. Throughout his ordeal, the courts colluded in his mistreatment.

In a wider sense, Siamak Pourzand's treatment also discredits claims that the Islamic Republic offers some democratic space for the people of Iran to influence events in their country. Despite elections which invested the government of President Mohammad Khatami with a clear mandate to implement reform, hard-line conservatives schemed and maneuvered to thwart the will of the Iranian people. Siamak Pourzand was the innocent victim they exploited for this purpose.

"Siamak Pourzand's case was at the center of a pivotal moment in recent Iranian history. He was framed as a warning to others in the reform movement that the clerical establishment would not allow them to liberalize conditions in the Islamic Republic. His case vividly demonstrates the degree to which Iran's conservative hard-liners are prepared to cynically undermine institutions of their own creation to maintain their influence over Iranian society," said Tom Parker, Executive Director of the IHRDC.

Mockery of Justice: The Framing of Siamak Pourzand is currently available in English on IHRDC's website at <http://www.iranhrdc.org>. A Farsi version of the report will be released in October.

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