

PRESS RELEASE

Iran Human Rights Documentation Center Releases Report: “*Silencing Dissidents in Iran: A Legal Analysis*”

(New Haven, Connecticut, March 7, 2007) – The Islamic Republic of Iran is exploiting legal mechanisms to silence dissident voices from the political debate inside the Republic. Following the widespread international condemnation provoked by its campaign of political assassinations in the 1980s and 1990s the clerical establishment turned to legal mechanisms to marginalize Iranian opposition opinion. Such methods remain in use today.

This argument is advanced by the prominent Iranian jurist Mrs. Mehrangiz Kar in the first of a series of commentaries on developments in Iranian law during the Khatami era in which the clerical establishment responded to the reformist agenda pressed by President Mohammad Khatami by reasserting its authority through the judiciary. The series is published by the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC), a New Haven-based non-profit with the mission of documenting the human rights situation in Iran.

In *Silencing Dissidents in Iran: A Legal Analysis*, Mrs. Kar examines how the clerical establishment co-opted and distorted legal mechanisms as a tool for stifling dissent and a riposte to the reform movement. The report explains how the law was used in order to exclude dissidents from positions in government and the legislature. In her commentary Mrs. Kar highlights how the government exploited legal ambiguities to gag its opponents. She also exposes the clerical establishment’s habitual disregard for due legal process and the casual exploitation of parallel structures to avoid oversight, techniques still used.

Mrs. Kar is an attorney, writer and activist working toward the promotion of democracy, the rule of law and human rights within the framework of Islamic law in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Despite her efforts being frequently impeded and curtailed by the Iranian authorities, she has been an active public defender in Iran’s civil and criminal courts, and has been widely published inside and outside Iran. In April of 2000 Mrs. Kar was arrested and imprisoned on charges of acting against the national security of the Islamic Republic of Iran. She was eventually released on medical grounds. Mrs. Kar is currently a scholar-in-residence at Harvard Law School and is unable to return to Iran as there are further charges of a similar nature pending against her.

"IHRDC is proud to be associated with Mrs. Kar’s work and we believe that her commentary will carry great weight inside Iran. Mrs. Kar’s report exposes how the clerical establishment resisted attempts at reform during the Khatami era and perverted the rule of law in Iran to continue its persecution of opposition figures. This has created a foundation for repression that continues to this day," said Tom Parker, Executive Director of the IHRDC.

Silencing Dissidents in Iran: A Legal Analysis is available in Farsi on IHRDC's website at <http://www.iranhrdc.org>. The report is the first in a series of four legal commentaries contributed by Mrs. Kar.

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