

URGENT ACTION

ONE FILMMAKER RELEASED, ONE STILL DETAINED

Iranian filmmaker Ja'far Panahi was released on bail on 25 May. However, filmmaker Mohammad Ali Shirzadi is still held in Evin Prison in Tehran.

Ja'far Panahi was released on 25 May after payment of bail equivalent to about US\$200,000. His case has been referred to a Revolutionary Court, and he may still face trial. If convicted and imprisoned on the basis of his peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression, Amnesty International would consider him to be a prisoner of conscience.

Ja'far Panahi was arrested on 1 March. He had begun a hunger strike on 16 May, after an interrogation session during which he was accused of filming in his cell. Prison guards reportedly threatened to arrest his family to punish him. On 19 May, he phoned his family and read them a letter he had written to the authorities and asked his family to publish the text of the letter. In it, he demanded to be allowed visits from his family and to receive assurance that they were safe; to be allowed to meet with his lawyer and finally to be released until his trial. He vowed to continue his hunger strike until his demands were met. On 21 May, he was allowed visits by his family and his lawyer, and met Tehran's Prosecutor, who announced that his case would be reviewed, and he was released four days later.

Another filmmaker, **Mohammad Ali Shirzadi**, is still held in Evin prison. His lawyer, Farideh Gheytrat, has not been allowed to meet with him and has not been granted access to his file.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Persian, Arabic, English, French or your own language:

- ✓ Calling on the Iranian authorities to drop any charges brought or contemplated against Ja'far Panahi;
- ✓ Calling on the Iranian authorities to release Mohammad Ali Shirzadi immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression;
- ✓ Urging the authorities to protect Mohammad Ali Shirzadi from torture or other ill-treatment and to grant him immediate and regular access to his family, his lawyers and to any medical care he may need;

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 28 JULY 2010 TO:

Head of the Provincial Judiciary in
Tehran

Ali Reza Avaei
Karimkhan Zand Avenue
Sana'i Avenue, Corner of Alley 17, No.
152
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: avaei@Dadgostary-tehran.ir
Salutation: Dear Mr Avaei

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani
Howzeh Riyasat-e Goveh Qazaiyeh
(Office of the Head of the Judiciary)
Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave., south of
Serah-e Jomhuri
Tehran 1316814737
Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: Via website:
<http://www.dadiran.ir/tabid/75/Default.aspx>
First starred box: your given name;
second starred box: your family name;
third: your email address

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Director, Human Rights Headquarters
Mohammad Javad Larijani
Howzeh Riassat-e Ghoveh Ghazaiyeh
Pasteur St, Vali Asr Ave., south of
Serah-e Jomhuri
Tehran 1316814737
Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: +98 21 3390 4986
Email: bia.judi@yahoo.com (In subject
line: **FAO Mohammad Javad Larijani**)
Salutation: Dear Mr Larijani

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA: 107/10 (MDE 13/048/2010) Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/048/2010/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ja'far Panahi is a well-known film director who has made internationally-acclaimed films such as *The White Balloon* and *The Circle*. He is also a peace activist who is a member of the National Peace Council in Iran, a group set up in July 2008 on the initiative of the Centre for Human Rights Defenders, an NGO established by Nobel Peace Laureate Shirin Ebadi and other prominent lawyers. The National Peace Council has 85 representatives from different social and ethnic groups and professions. Its aims are "creating and strengthening the basis for peace; preventing a military attack; abolishing the imposed sanctions and preventing any additional sanctions; ending the situation of 'Neither war, Nor Peace.'"

Ja'far Panahi was previously arrested in July 2009 during a gathering at a cemetery in Tehran of people mourning the death of Neda Agha Soltan, a young woman killed by someone believed to be a member of the Basij militia during a protest against the outcome of the 2009 presidential election. He was later released, but subsequently banned from travelling abroad. The ban prevented him from attending the 2009 Berlin Film Festival, in which he had been due to participate. After his arrest in March 2010, he was invited to participate in the jury of the Cannes Film Festival between 12 and 23 May 2010. During the festival, an empty chair was set aside for him as a sign of protest at his continuing detention (see: Iran must allow detained filmmaker to appear at Cannes, 11 May 2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/iran-must-allow-detained-filmmaker-appear-cannes-2010-05-11>).

During his detention, Iranian officials said that he had been arrested in connection with his alleged filming of an unauthorized anti-government film about the election. His family denied he had been doing anything illegal, stating that he had been filming in his own house and the film had not been against the government. In a letter from prison read out at the Cannes Film Festival, Ja'far Panahi also denied making an anti-government film.

Mohammad Ali Shirzadi is a member of the now-banned Association in Defence of Prisoners' Rights, founded by prominent human rights defender Emadeddin Baghi. He was arrested by five unidentified men on 4 January 2010. His family had no news about his whereabouts for 40 days before learning that he was in Evin prison. They have been able to visit him. His family believe his arrest may have been linked to an interview he filmed around two years ago, between Emadeddin Baghi and Grand Ayatollah Montazeri. The film was shown on BBC Persian TV after Grand Ayatollah Montazeri's death in December 2009. Emadeddin Baghi was arrested afterwards and has been in detention since (see UA: 05/10 Index: MDE 13/003/2010 and follow-up).

Iran is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees the right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information, whether "orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media".

Further information on UA: 107/10 Index: MDE 13/061/2010 Issue Date: 16 June 2010

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