

PEN-CANADA'S CAMPAIGN ON BEHALF OF SIAMAK POURZAND

<http://www.pencanada.ca/>



Iranian journalist and film critic
Siamak Pourzand

This month PEN Canada focuses on a few of the many cases of persecution of writers in Iran. These cases are all part of a pattern of repression against reformist and independent figures by the conservative judiciary that has been gathering momentum in Iran since the parliamentary elections of February 2000.

Continued Clampdown on Freedom of Expression in Iran

<http://iona.ghandchi.com/PEN/PENprisoners.htm>

Send an Appeal letter on behalf of Siamak Pourzand (see below)

writers *in prison* **committee**

Urgent Appeal: Siamak Pourzand

May 10, 2002

His Excellency Hojjatoleslam Sayed Mohammad Khatami
President of the Islamic Republic of Iran
c/o The Presidency
Palestine Avenue
Azerbaijan Intersection,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Excellency,

SP00183

<http://iona.ghandchi.com/PEN/PENcanada.htm>

5/7/04

I wish to add my name to this appeal from PEN Canada, the Canadian centre of the world writers' organization, International PEN. PEN Canada protests the eight-year prison sentence handed down to 72 year-old journalist, film critic and PEN Canada honorary member **Siamak Pourzand** on May 3, 2002. We are also extremely concerned about reports from a reliable source that Siamak Pourzand suffered a heart attack last week.

Pourzand was seized by security police on November 29, 2001. The authorities said nothing about his disappearance and during his first four months of detention, he had no access to a lawyer or medical care. Pourzand suffers from diabetes and a heart condition.

The Tehran Press Court reportedly sentenced Pourzand to eight years' imprisonment on charges of "undermining state security through his links with monarchists and counter-revolutionaries". It is widely believed that the charges against him are based on 'confessions' which are thought to have been exacted under duress.

It is believed that Pourzand's disappearance and the charges brought against him may be connected to his position as manager of the Majmue-ye Farrhangi-ye Honari-ye Tehran, a cultural centre for writers, artists, and intellectuals or to his articles critical of the Islamic regime.

PEN Canada considers the charges against Siamak Pourzand to be in violation of his right to freedom of expression, as guaranteed by Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Iran has ratified.

We demand that the authorities release him from prison immediately and unconditionally, and that he immediately be provided with the urgent medical treatment he requires, including transfer to a hospital if needed.

We are also extremely concerned about reports that Pourzand was ill-treated whilst in pre-trial detention, and that his trial has not been conducted according to fair standards as articulated in the Iranian Constitution and international treaties.

We urge the authorities to respond to these concerns.

Your Name
PEN Canada member

Read about our other Honorary Members in Iran, and the Berlin Conference



Writer, editor and human rights lawyer **Mehrangiz Kar** flew back to Tehran last April after having attended a conference in Berlin

entitled "Iran After the Elections."

Soon after, she was arrested and charged with "acting against national security" for attending the conference, and incarcerated in the notoriously harsh Evin Prison for a month. She was one of several Iranian reformist writers, academics and intellectuals who had participated in the seminars at the Henrich Böll Institute in Berlin. After being released on payment of substantial bail, she was tried in secret on October 31 before the Revolutionary Court, whose procedures consistently fall far short of international standards for fairness. The verdict is still not known.

At least twelve writers and activists face charges related to their attendance at the Berlin conference. PEN Canada has adopted five of the Iranian conference attendees as Honorary Members and is campaigning on their behalf. In addition to Mehrangiz Kar, they are:

- **Shahla Lahiji**, managing director of a publishing house and women's studies centre, and vocal supporter of women's rights. She was also detained for one month on her return from Berlin, released on bail, and tried on October 31 behind closed doors;

- **Hojatolelam Hassan Eshkevari**, journalist, researcher, independent cleric and scholar. He delayed his return from Berlin until August 4 and was arrested the next day. Since then he has been kept in solitary confinement in Evin prison, and denied legal counsel. In his trial he faces charges of apostasy, "declaring war on God", and "being corrupt on earth", which can carry the death penalty;



- **Khalil Rostamkhani**, a translator and journalist. He has been detained since May after providing translations services to the Berlin conference and appeared in court on November 9, 2000. Accusations against him include being a "mohareb" (fighter against god), of having "received and distributed leaflets and press releases from opposition groups based abroad and of having participated in the organisation of the Berlin conference, which posed a threat to the country's security". The prosecutor is seeking the death penalty.

- and **Akbar Ganji**, a journalist. He was arrested in April upon his return to Iran and faces charges of insulting religious edicts and figures, threatening national security, and dissemination of propaganda against the Islamic system. He was brought to the Revolutionary Court on November 9 where he told the judge he had been hung upside down in his cell while being kicked in head and stomach by four prison guards; he started a hunger strike to protest his treatment which included 80 days in solitary confinement and no access to his family or lawyer.

