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Police say Iranian artist missing for 11 days

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER
Associated Press
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An exiled Iranian artist and filmmaker has been missing for 11 days and German authorities are trying to determine his whereabouts, police said Friday.

Daryush Shokof, a 55-year-old Berlin resident, was last seen on May 24 in Cologne, where he planned to board a train to Paris.

"As of now we have no information about his whereabouts and we don't have any evidence that a crime took place," Berlin police spokesman Guido Busch said. "However, we're investigating in all directions and are in contact with various exile groups from Iran that are based in Germany."

Kazem Moussavi, a friend of Shokof's and self-described regime critic, told The Associated Press that Shokof was "a harsh critic of the Iranian government and constantly received threatening phone calls."

Last month, two new Shokof films critical of the Iranian government were shown in Berlin.

In those two movies, "Iran Zendan" and "Hitler's Grave," Shokof sharply criticizes the regime's ideology and shows scenes of torture and rape at an Iranian prison.

Moussavi said that he had not been able to reach Shokof by e-mail or on his cell phone since he disappeared.

"We fear that the Iranian regime is responsible for his disappearance," Moussavi said.

Javad Asadian, another friend and writer from Berlin, also said Shokof had received threatening phone calls.

"He especially received these threatening phone calls after parts of his film 'Iran Zendan' were published on YouTube," Asadian told the AP.

Asadian said he also had been trying to reach Shokof on his cell phone for the past 11 days and left many messages asking him to call back, but neither he nor other friends had heard anything from Shokof.

"He was planning to visit Paris for about a week, but he never showed up at his friends' place there," he added. "I talked to them, they also haven't heard a word from him."

The Berlin-based group Stop The Bomb, which is critical of the current Iranian government, also said in a statement that it is "concerned for the health and life of Shokof."

Iranian Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi told the Persian Service of German broadcaster Deutsche Welle that the fact "that a famous filmmaker gets on the train and then it's not known what happened to him is the responsibility of the German government," according to Iran Press News, an Iranian opposition Web site.

"I hold the German state responsible for the disappearance of the Iranian artist," Ebadi was quoted as saying.

The Nobel laureate could not immediately be reached by phone.

Scheherezade Faramarzi contributed reporting from Beirut, Lebanon.

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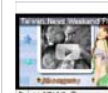
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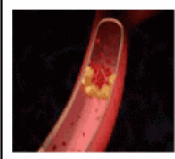
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