

INTERNATIONAL PEN
Writers in Prison Committee

IRAN CAMPAIGN

MAY 7-28, 2002

Sentenced: Journalist and film critic Siamak Pourzand

"My husband is in such a poor mental state, in such a desperate mood and such a weak psychological posture that he has accepted, I fear, to confess to every accusation he has been charged by his interrogators." Mehrangiz Kar speaking in March 2002 about the detention of her husband Siamak Pourzand.

On March 6, 2002, the Iranian authorities began closed and unannounced proceedings against veteran journalist and film critic Siamak Pourzand. On May 3, 2002 the Tehran Press Court reportedly sentenced Pourzand to eight years in prison 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 that are thought to have been exacted under duress.

Pourzand, who is in his early seventies, had been held incommunicado by the Iranian intelligence services since November 29, 2001. He suffers from diabetes and a heart complaint. His family had not been informed of his whereabouts, and he was reportedly denied access to his lawyer and medical assistance since his arrest.

It is thought that Siamak Pourzand's arrest may be connected to his position as manager of the Majmue-ye Farrhangi-ye Honari-ye Tehran, a cultural center for writers, artists, and intellectuals. Pourzand is also known for his articles critical of the Islamic regime, and is said to have been recently working with foreign-based Farsi language media prior to his detention.

Siamak Pourzand is the husband of writer, human rights lawyer, and editor of the now-banned *Zan* literary review Mehrangiz Kar, who was sentenced to four years' imprisonment for her participation in the Berlin conference held in April 2000. Kar was arrested on April 29, 2000 on charges of "acting against national security," and held at Evin Prison until her release on bail on June 21, 2000. Her sentence was reduced on appeal in November 2001 to six months' imprisonment, calculated as time served (two months) plus a 500,000 rial fine. She is currently in the United States receiving medical treatment for cancer.

International PEN believes that journalist and film-critic Siamak Pourzand is being detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression. We are also seriously concerned about reports that Pourzand was ill treated while 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 therefore protest the eight-year

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prison sentence passed against him, and call for his immediate and unconditional release in accordance with Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a signatory.

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Please write a polite letter on your personal or institutional letterhead requesting that Siamak Pourzand be released - or copy the one below - and mail to His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei (postage 80¢) and to the Iranian Interests Section (postage 34¢).

[Date]

*His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran
c/o The Presidency
Palestine Avenue
Azerbaijan Intersection
Tehran
Islamic Republic of Iran*

Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my grave and urgent concern about the imprisonment of journalist and film critic Siamak Pourzand. As you know, on May 3, 2002 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." I understand Mr. Pourzand was tried in a closed proceeding, that your government has offered no explanation of the charges or case against him, and that he may in fact have been convicted on the basis of statements made under duress while in incommunicado detention. I am particularly concerned for his well-being, as I understand he is of an advanced age and is in poor physical condition. I fear Mr. Pourzand is being detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression as guaranteed by Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which your country has ratified. Please reconsider Mr. Pourzand's case and, in a spirit of humanity, facilitate his immediate release.

Sincerely,

[Your name and signature]

*Cc:
Iranian Interests Section
c/o Embassy of Pakistan to the United States
2209 Wisconsin Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20007*