

# IRAN TODAY



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## SOLIDARITY



with the  
Iranian People

## EDITORIAL

## IRAN: ONE YEAR AFTER ...

**I**n a country where political parties of the left are banned, trades unionists have no right to organise, religious minorities are persecuted and human rights abuses are routine, no election can be described as free and fair. What passes for Parliamentary democracy in the Islamic Republic of Iran requires the vetting of all candidates, their approval by the clergy and no dissent from the core values of the Islamic Republic.

Against this background it is remarkable that on Friday, 12 June 2009 the people of Iran came out in their millions to reject unequivocally the return of Ahmadinejad in the country's presidential election. Thirty years after bringing down the Shah's notorious regime and demanding that its tyranny be replaced by a peaceful, democratic and just society, it was crystal clear to the majority of voters that the aspirations of the February 1979 Revolution had been callously and unequivocally betrayed by the theocratic regime and the current president during his first four-year term leading up to the election. There was an overwhelming demand for change and the reform candidate, Mir Hossein Mousavi, was informed of his landslide victory on Saturday, 13 June.

In the face of outright rejection by the people, the clergy turned swiftly to coercion in a frantic bid to shore up their candidate whatever the cost. While Mousavi, having gone through the usual vetting procedures for candidacy was no radical, the extent of the opposition to Ahmadinejad nevertheless gave the clergy pause for thought. The expectations raised by the relative 'liberalisation' of 1997- 2005, under President Khatami, may not be so easily contained a second time. With these considerations in mind and, despite all evidence to the contrary, the regime massively falsified the count and changed the votes of Mousavi, the real winner, with those of Ahmadinejad.

People from all strata of society – women, youth and students, workers and trades unionists, artists and intellectuals - reacted swiftly and by 15 June, more than three million had taken to the streets of Tehran and other major cities in protest, demanding to have their votes recognised, the true result declared and their candidate installed as president. The Green



Movement was born.

From that day on, the regime outlawed all opposition. Candidates who had stood against Ahmadinejad were confined to their homes and those close to them harassed and intimidated. Protesters were attacked and killed in the streets. Hundreds were arrested then physically, sexually and psychologically tortured, or murdered, in a relentless bid to silence every last voice for change. Whatever the regime brought out of its arsenal to suppress and terrorise, still more people came forward to defy the government – international footballers, journalists and editors, roof-top protesters, street protesters – telling the world what was going on in their country and vowing never to stop until the government had met their demand that their wishes, expressed in the 12th June election, be acknowledged, respected and implemented.

Fourteen months on and the regime has not succeeded in silencing the voices demanding change. Any mention of the movement for change is outlawed. All opposition media are banned. Trades union activists, workers, student leaders, women's movement campaigners, writers, artists and professors continue to be held as political prisoners in atrocious conditions. Many have died but more voices replace them, daily telling the world how the regime is bankrupting Iran's economy, mismanaging the country's rich resources, enriching its cronies from a 'redistribution' of state assets. Such hard-won constitutional rights as exist, are being rescinded and whole sections of the population are being pushed into absolute poverty.

It is ironic that, had the clergy allowed the real result of the election to stand, and Mousavi to assume the presidency, their credibility in the country could hardly be less than it is now. In a deeply conservative society the clergy have been able to portray themselves as the defenders of the ideals of the 1979 revolution and retain some degree of support. Since the 12th June 2009 that façade has been stripped away and the regime is seen to be hanging on through brute force alone.

Since 12th June 2009, the Iranian people have not only continued an unwavering campaign in Iran but have also showed the world exactly what the regime of Ahmadinejad is about and why they want to change it. Now, more than at any other time, the people of Iran need international solidarity to support them in their struggle to ensure that their just demands are met.

The way for all those bravely united behind the demand for change to achieve their vision of a country free from violence, poverty and dictatorship is not from any foreign intervention in their affairs on any pretext. Nor is it from a theocracy or any self-serving government of the rich and powerful. It is only through the democratic choice of the Iranian people that a future of peace and justice can be built.

Our role is to support the Iranian people in their struggle against dictatorship. We should listen to and voice our support for their demands; campaign for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners; demand an end to executions and inhuman treatment of detainees; and demand that the perpetrators of human rights abuses be brought to justice. We should support the establishment of democracy in Iran and the right of its people, and only its people, to determine its future.

# The Youth of Iran and Iran's People's Opposition Movement



One year has past since the development of the recent opposition movement in Iran. During this unrest, one thing that was more visible in the broadcasts of the events was presence of Iranian women and youth demanding their basic human rights in spite of the gun fire of para-military forces. A large part of the educated youth of the middle class, which carries the future progress of society, participated in these events and paid their dues with prison, torture, rape and death.

Among the victims and deaths resulting from crackdowns after the election, we have seen many belonging to the working class. Many interviews with family members of these victims, reflect the participation of the working class in the opposition movement.

According to a deputy in the Centre for Statistics of Iran the age group of 20-29 has increased from 16% to 23% of the population in the last 10 years. This will be a huge challenge facing the fundamentalist regime in Iran. The recent movement in Iran, in spite its ups and downs and

lack of leadership, continues to grow. The social character of this movement is more progressive than the slogans of the Green Movement would suggest.

Some of the stated aims of the Green Movement include:-

- Individual's rights and the right to enjoy life
- Willingness to merge with the modern and advancing world
- Enjoying social freedoms

The Green Movement sees the demand for political freedom as the most important social tool for a better life. These are the principal demands of people, especially large section of Iranian youth. Wearing the colour green, they show their presence in the streets of Iran. Many of these active students, educated and youth are from working class families. Many more of the opposition masses are workers.

The fact that some political tendencies call the whole movement "green" or portray the will of all participating groups similar to theirs, should not take away from real situation. Workers, whose

lives have become much harder day by day under the neo-liberal policies of the Ahmadinejad government, are joining the opposition movement. How quickly this accelerates depends on factors such as the current situation in Iran and the relationship of the West towards Iran. The working classes see the recent events as opposition to their current condition and more and more will support and participate. They understand the necessity of supporting this movement by looking at their own hardship. It is obvious that the youth movement and the middle class have more means to participate in activities such as street activities. The working class has different methods of struggle. Many workers live close to poverty levels and usually can not afford to risk jobs and their livelihoods.

This is why they prefer not to participate in adventurist activities. Their struggle occurs within their work environment and it is closely linked to their work. The work that has tied up the young worker like a slave, has tied up the employer as well. The employers and the ruling regime are dependent to the workers and their jobs. This is the most important tool of struggle for workers.

The Green Movement should distance itself from the media description of "the movement of middle class and wealthy" and strive to attract more of the working class to the movement. Iranian youth have been raised with Islamic Republic propaganda for the last 31 years. The majority of educated people are fed the very conservative political and economic theories of the contemporary world. However, based on past history, at historical junctures like the past year, these same youth from different social strata and different viewpoints, have shown that, in order to gain their basic right for a dignified life, they are willing to sacrifice their lives. This is how the idealist young generation of Iran has risen like a fragile sapling from the ashes of their parents struggle and hope for a brighter future for the people of Iran.

Iran and its young movement with a history of more than 100 years of struggle and three historic slogans of "Independence, Freedom, Social Equality" has a long way to go to reach a secular society similar to most countries in the world.

At that time years of separation from world society will end and this new generation can freely distinguish between colours. The struggle for more real changes will then start.

# Iran's Workers, the Syndicates and the struggle for Change!

*With the labour movement in Iran having faced its "harshest year in the past decade" the task of those attempting to organise for basic trades union and human rights does not get easier.*

*In an interview with **Maziyar Mehrpour**, the Executive Board member of the Coordinating Committee to assist the formation of labour organisations, CODIR explores some of the issues faced by workers in Iran today.*



Mayday demonstrations in Tehran

**Q** Events in Iran over the past 14 months in relation to the presidential elections have been given prominent coverage by the world press. What are the main demands of the popular movement?

**A** In my opinion the people's central desire is their urgent and strong need for changes in various economic, social, cultural and political areas. The election has been a pretext to manifest these demands at this point of time.

**Q** How do you view and analyse the role of the workers in this popular movement?

**A** The workers have consistently participated and been involved in all of the protests. A look at the statistics, of those murdered and detained, attests to the high participation and contribution of workers and their families in these events. However, it has always been a

cause for concern that the presence of workers is scattered. In other words, the lack of far-reaching labour organisations, as the essential means of collective decision making and the vital vehicle for formulating and expressing their demands, has been the most important challenge confronting the workers at this point in time. The fact is, that in order for the workers to effectively have an impact upon and influence these events, they need to get organised more than ever.

**Q** Is it true that in the past year the labour community of Iran has had its harshest year in the past decade, in terms of the basic rights of the workers?

**A** Yes. In the past year, the working class lived through one of the worst and gravest years of its lifetime in terms of massive lay-offs and unemployment, months and months of unpaid wages, frequent arrests and summoning



of labour activists, etc.

**Q** During the past year, the government took advantage of the crisis in society and the atmosphere of suppression to advance certain plans and programmes. These included the implementation of Article 44 of the Constitution regarding privatisation, passing the law of Targeted Subsidies [i.e. cutting them], and the review to improve temporary labour contracts. What is the position of the labour movement about these policies?

**A:** In my opinion, the protest movement last year actually made the government retreat from implementing a number of these plans. If conditions were in their favour, they would have carried out all of these plans by now. In various interviews, the authorities have time and again admitted this matter candidly. The position of an overwhelming majority of the labour leaders and activists, which has been stated in various writings and interviews, has been very clear and revealing about these issues. With their limited means and resources available to them, they have informed workers and working people of the consequences of these plans and programmes.

**Q** Are matters like the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention and the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (ILO Conventions 98 and 87) important matters for the labour movement? What campaigns are the Iranian labour activists thinking of and planning for realising such conventions?

**A** Iranian labour activists, in general, don't have any illusions about the role and nature of organisations like the ILO in embracing the capitalist system; nevertheless, they make use of the positive articles in these conventions in order to advance their own demands and to impose their own agenda on the state.

About realising the contents of these conventions, it should be noted that only the perseverance and determination of the workers to implement these demands, which would lead to a change in the power balance in favour of the labour movement, could make the state recognise these demands. The most important of these is to acknowledge the right to organise labour itself.

**Q** In the last annual conference of the ILO the Iranian regime agreed to a visit by a delegation of the ILO to review the discrimination in the workplaces in Iran. How important is this? Would the Iranian regime keep its promise?

**A** I believe all and any of these demands and pressures on the regime could be helpful and useful for the labour movement to a certain extent. We must make use of all of these means.

**Q** In relation to the role of international solidarity with the protest movement in Iran and the labour movement in particular, what demands have more importance? How could organisations like the Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights (CODIR) effectively help and support your current campaigns and battles?

**A** There is no doubt that any and all of these domestic and international efforts are a critical part of the process for our society to achieve its legitimate goals and demands. Without this solidarity and broad communications that have been made possible for people, thanks to the growth of the mass media, realising and advancing the goals and ideals of our movement would face even more serious hurdles.

With best wishes for success and prosperity!

# Exiled Journalist Sees Hope for the Future of Iran

*The cultural sector in Iran continues to be an area in which independent voices struggle to be heard. Film makers, musicians, writers and journalists invariably have to impose a form of self censorship to survive inside Iran, or flee the country in order to express themselves freely.*

*Journalist **Soheil Asefi** recently found himself in exactly this position and was compelled to leave Iran.*

*CODIR National Organiser, **Jane Green**, met Mr Asefi who outlined some of the pressures which led him to leave Iran and his assessment of the prospects for the future.*



Nuremberg, Germany. It was here that the main war criminals of the Nazi regime of terror were tried by the International Military Tribunal in the “Nuremberg Trials”. The city, which was badly damaged by bombs during World War II, today presents itself as a successful blend of a lively past and modern present day life. With about 500,000 inhabitants and an area of 186.5 square kilometres, Nuremberg is Franconia’s biggest city. The city area extends on both sides of the River Pegnitz which divides the city into a northern and a southern half. Nuremberg’s surroundings are characterised by attractive landscapes: in the east, the Franconian Mountains (Fränkische Alb), in the north the Franconian Jura (Fränkische Schweiz), and in the south west the Franconian Lake District.

Nuremberg is many miles from the Iranian capital, Tehran, but it is here that Soheil Asefi has had to set up home, temporarily, he hopes. From the age of 15 he started working with cinema and cultural publications. Over time he wrote for the politics and culture pages of numerous papers in Iran. He established his own weblog at a point in time when weblog publishing in Iran was very young. This weblog was filled with many articles about the politics and culture of Iran and the world. From time to time, some pieces that were published in the printed media were also reflected in this weblog. Also, quite a number of links to the news sites in various Farsi and global media were posted and were visited daily by hundreds of Farsi-speaking visitors from all over the world, including the remote rural areas of Iran.

Asefi’s activities inevitably brought him to the attention of the authorities and detention by the Islamic Revolutionary Court. There were many days of solitary confinement and interrogation. When he was temporarily released, Asefi

had lost 11 kilos.

After 60 days in solitary confinement, his general health was not very good. He was banned from writing and the university administration would not allow him to continue his studies and graduate. Eventually, he managed to get his bachelor degree in cinema. To continue his education and work, about a year and a half ago he left Iran for Germany. Presently, he resides in Germany under the “Writers in Exile” programme that is run by the German P.E.N. Centre and the Human Rights Office of the city of Nuremberg.

In spite of his enforced exile Asefi remains optimistic, particularly about the role of young people in the present protests against the regime in Iran. As Asefi points out, more than 70% of the Iran’s population today is made up of young people.

“These youth, very much like the youth their age anywhere else in the world, have their needs and demands that are not fulfilled by the framework of the Islamic Republic,” he says. Asefi is also encouraged by the numbers of women engaged in the protests. “At present, 65% of Iranian students are women, and the number of female professors is also high,” he points out, “however, the laws of the Islamic Republic, value each woman as half of a man. The rules and regulations that were set in place by the theocratic regime, after the revolution of 1979, instituted discrimination in areas like testifying and marriage.”

Asefi goes further and stresses that the young people in Iran at present have it in their hands to change the country’s future for the better, bringing about democratic





change in Iran.

“If we call the recent movement the ‘movement of joy’ we have not gone too far”, he says. “This is a movement whose demand is to fill the gap that has been created by the ruling regime in the past 31 years. This movement desires another kind of life, human life based on the criteria declared in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that has no place in the models of the Islamic Republic.”

Like many who have been forced to flee the country in recent times, Asefi sees the outcome of the 12th June 2009 presidential election as pivotal. The fact that Ahmadinejad was effectively forced upon the country for a second term, the major protests which followed on immediately from the election and the ongoing role of the left in the day to day lives of the people in Iran are all signs of hope.

“Despite the unprecedented clamp down on left political parties and organisations in Iran the left is still present in all levels of society”, he states. “The regime’s fear of their presence and their potential power is very evident in the recent events. Official authorities of the Islamic Republic have repeatedly warned against the presence of Marxists in the recent movement. But they (the left) always do what they have to do, even under circumstances that their organisation and assembly becomes almost non-existent. They make use of their past historic experiences, and that’s the secret of their survival.”

Asefi is concerned however that there are some on the extreme left who see Ahmadinejad as “anti-imperialist” as a result of close relations between the Iranian government with Latin American states and President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela.

“The closeness between the head of Iran’s government and Latin American countries and Hugo Chavez really shocks and deeply saddens the progressive and left forces in Iran”, he states. “They have tried many times to have their voice heard by those who claim to strive for “another world”, and so far this effort has been practically fruitless. They talk about opening new ways to fight imperialism in the world of socialism, but regrettably they follow the outdated and obsolete approach that ‘the enemy of my enemy, is my friend’. What they do is unbelievable and is not consistent at all with the basic pillars of today’s civilisation and democracy, socialism, and our views and beliefs, which they claim to believe in too.”

Finally, Asefi welcomes the work of international solidarity organisations, such as CODIR, and those fighting to ensure that the true voices of the Iranian people are heard.

“Yes, I have followed CODIR”, he says, “and have always been glad that a progressive group in Britain is vocal and on the side of the struggles in my country through raising awareness and media work. These types of activities must be expanded at this stage.”

As the sun sets over this historic German city one cannot help but feel that the weight of history is with Soheil Asefi and that his exile will not be an indefinite one.

The full text of this interview can be found at

**[www.codir.net](http://www.codir.net)**



# FROM STATE MANIPULATION TO PERSONAL DICTATORSHIP – IRAN, ONE YEAR AFTER THE ELECTION

Jane Green



**The passing of the first anniversary of the 12th June 2009 election, which returned Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to office, has been marked by an intensification of the crackdown on opposition voices in Iran. Jane Green highlights the current state of the struggle in Iran and the prospects for the regime.**

In June this year Amnesty International published *From Protest to Prison – Iran One Year After the Election*, which reviewed a year of arrest and detention of those who have spoken out against the government and its abuses.

As Claudio Cordone, Amnesty International's interim Secretary General stated,

*“The Iranian government is determined to silence all dissenting voices, while at the same time trying to avoid all scrutiny by the international community into the violations connected to the post-election unrest.”*

The report focuses upon some key examples of arbitrary arrest and detention including:-

- Banned student Sayed Ziauddin Nabavi serving a 10-year prison sentence in Evin Prison. A member of the Council to Defend the Right to Education, his sentence appears to be linked to the fact that he has relatives in the People's Mojahedin

Organisation of Iran, a banned group, which the authorities claim was responsible for organising demonstrations.

- Around 50 members of the Baha'i faith have been arrested across Iran since the elections, continuing to be unjustly cast as scapegoats for the unrest.
- Iran's ethnic minority communities have faced arrest and detention, during and following the election. Four Kurds were among five political prisoners executed in May without the notifications required by law, in what was a clear message to anyone considering marking the June election anniversary with protest.

As Claudio Cordone has stated, the position of Amnesty International is very clear,

*“What we are calling for is very simple: the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience and for others to be tried promptly on recognisably criminal offences, without recourse to the death penalty, in proceedings which fully meet international standards for a fair trial.”*

Iran has one of the highest rates of executions in the world. To date in 2010, Amnesty International has already recorded over 115 executions.

The report reinforces facts which have been highlighted by CODIR, Amnesty and other human rights organisations over the past year and presents a damning indictment of the Islamic Republic's failure to address basic human rights issues and the demands of civil society.

The intransigence of the regime was further highlighted in July with the international outcry which followed the sentencing to stoning of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, who had been accused of adultery. Commuting the sentence to death by hanging has not stemmed the tide of protest.

In a further development the lawyer defending Ashtiani, Mohammed Mostafaei, has been missing following his release from judicial questioning. The authorities have further responded by detaining the lawyer's wife and brother in law, prompting fears that they have been







arrested to put pressure upon Mostafaei.

Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa director, has been quite clear about the intentions of the regime stating,

"Mohammad Mostafaei is a thorn in the side of the Iranian authorities and we fear that he is being persecuted in an attempt to stop him carrying out his professional activities as a defence lawyer and in support of human rights." As Amnesty International has pointed out, there is a longstanding pattern of harassment and imprisonment of human rights lawyers in Iran.

In 2002, Nasser Zarafshan was sentenced to five years' imprisonment, partly on trumped-up charges of possessing a firearm and alcohol offences. Abdolfattah Soltani was sentenced to five years' imprisonment in 2005 for disclosing public documents and "propaganda against the system".

The sentence was overturned on appeal on 2007 but he was arrested again in 2009 and held for two months before being released on bail. Mohammad Olyaeifard, is serving a one-year prison sentence imposed for comments he made criticising the judiciary after the execution of one of his clients, juvenile offender Behnoud Shojae.

Other Iranian human rights lawyers such as Nobel Prize winner Shirin Ebadi and Shadi Sadr, recipient of various international human rights awards, now work outside of Iran, fearing to return.

In addition to this pattern of persecution against the legal profession the regime's campaign against journalists continues with the ongoing internment of Abdolrezo Tajik who, at the end of July, had been held for 50 days without charge. The International Federation of Journalists has issued a call for Tajik's release and IFJ General Secretary, Aidan White, has stated,

"The failure to produce evidence that he has broken the law and the fears that he is being abused in jail should be enough to indicate that there is a terrible injustice here. If there is no case to answer he should be freed immediately and all the allegations of ill treatment must be investigated."

This ongoing pattern of suppression reflects a regime which

continues to resort to force to cover up its contradictions. Intolerance of open debate and free discussion are symptomatic of the tyranny which is Iran today.

The latest pronouncements from the leadership of the theocratic regime reinforce this picture. In late July the office of the Supreme Leader, Ayotollah Ali Khamenei, issued a statement which in effect states that everyone must obey Mr. Khamenei. For his authority to make such a statement Khamenei referred back to the Prophet Mohammed stating,

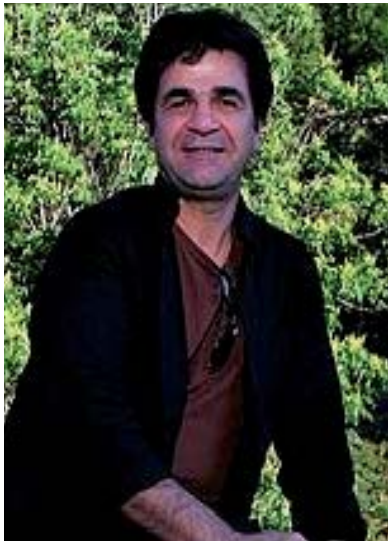
"An injury to the obedience to the faqih and the supreme leader is an injury to the Islamic regime itself, and I would not tolerate it from any person or group. Fortunately today, with God's blessing, all individuals and groups following the line of the Imam are committed to their obedience of the faqih and the supreme leader. We hope that conditions for their disobedience never emerge."

This movement towards personal dictatorship reflects the lack of confidence the regime has in its structures for government. It also demonstrates the extent to which the regime has been affected by the events following the 12th June 2009. The clerical establishment has been shaken and society in Iran is increasingly forming into two clear camps; those in favour of the medieval clericalism represented by Khamenei and those broadly in favour of the principles of the Green Movement, seeking modernisation, peace and democracy.

This contradiction will not be resolved overnight and it is clear that the Iranian people, in spite of their suffering under the theocratic regime, may yet be in for a long haul before they achieve their goal.

It is equally clear however that international solidarity in support of the Iranian people is more vital than ever and external pressure combined with the resolve of the Iranian people themselves will eventually move Iran into the twenty first century.

# Theocratic Regime Tries to Turn Iran into a Cultural Desert!



**W**ith the imposition of a fatwa on music by Ayatollah Khomeini Iranians are asking what future there is for culture in the Islamic Republic and wondering how far the regime will go in its repression of cultural activities. More and more artists are leaving the country and protesting against the regime from outside Iran's borders

In response to a young follower's enquiry as to whether he should take music lessons, Iran's supreme leader replied on 3rd August that although music was halal, promoting and teaching it was not compatible with the highest values of the sacred regime of the Islamic Republic and that young people should be studying science.

Khomeini has long been known for his opposition to music as has President Ahmadinejad. Since the revolution many musicians have been forced into exile, albums are refused distribution and permission is rarely given for concerts to be staged in Iran. In his film *No-one knows about Persian Cats* (which

won the Un certain regard prize and the jury's special prize at Cannes in 2009) the director Bahman Ghobadi tells the story of a group of young musicians trying to make music in defiance of the censor. The film reflects Ghobadi's own struggle as a young director: he spent days at the Ministry of Culture justifying his work. Because they did not have permission, *Persian Cats* was filmed in 17 days: the nervousness of the crew is reflected in the way the camera pans around – the police could have arrived on set at any moment. Iran's leading experimental musician Mahdyar Aghajani, collaborated on the film resulting in a score that is exciting and provocative.

In the film *Ashkan and Negar* are hoping to get a band together to perform overseas, their struggle to do this is documented in the film. The real life *Ashkan and Negar* have left Iran for Britain fearful of the consequences if they continue performing in Iran. Ghobadi too has been forced into exile in the USA from where he shouts his anger and sadness at what is happening in his native country.

Already detained then released in 2009 was re-arrested in March 2010 and imprisoned in the notorious Evin prison accused of "making a film against the regime following the post-election events". He was thus unable to attend the Cannes film festival, where he was due to sit on the jury.

The prosecutor's office said that Panahi's detention had no political motive but that he was "accused of some crimes". His imprisonment caused an international outcry: leading American directors, the

French and Government and Amnesty International condemned the action of the Iranian authorities. Juliette Binoche (awarded the prize for best female actor or her role in Abbas Kiarostami's *Certified Copy*) broke down in tears when speaking of Panahi at a press conference.

The Iranian government bowed to international pressure and released Panahi, forcing yet another of their leading artists into exile.

In January 2010 Panahi's fellow director Mohammad Ali Shirzadi was arrested outside his home in Tehran. His computer, personal notebook and other belongings were confiscated. Shirzadi's family believes his arrest could be connected to an interview he filmed between human-rights advocate Emadeddin Baghi and the late Ayatollah Hossein-Ali Montazeri two years ago. He was released on bail in June and is awaiting trial.

On the other hand, the doyen of Iranian film makers Abbas Kiarostami has not been harassed in the same way as his younger colleagues. He has said that the Iranian government as a whole has no relationship with his films. "... we can maybe say that these films don't really exist for them. It's not about whether they like it or don't; it's just not very important to them."

Iranian cinema has now firmly established its reputation on the international scene where those artists condemned by the regime are praised for their work. In trying to stifle artistic expression the government is only strengthening the resolve of exiled Iranians to bring their art to the world

# Struggle of Iranian Women

*Linda Sherwod*



## Free women political prisoners in Iran!

The year 2010 sees the one hundredth anniversary of International Women's Day but for many Iranian women celebration is impossible: they have been imprisoned or even executed by the Islamic regime because of their engagement in defence of human rights. Let me tell you about some of them ...

In 2007 Ronak Safazadeh, a Kurdish-Iranian graphic artist, was arrested by security forces who searched her home and were extremely violent towards her. She was imprisoned in Sanandaj, Kurdistan and there has been no information about her since then. Ronak is a member of the One Million Signatures campaign and police seized campaign material at her home. Prior to her arrest, Ronak Safazadeh attended a program commemorating the International Day of the Child, on Monday October 8, 2007, where she talked to participants about the Campaign and collected signatures in support of its petition.

Despite the fact that the collection of signatures in support of the Campaign asking the parliament to reform laws which discriminate against women is not illegal, nine

security agents arrived at her home in three cars the following day to arrest her.

Amnesty International has included her in their '12 people in danger' campaign and AI members throughout the world have bombarded the Iranian authorities with letters demanding her release.

Prominent in the campaign after the elections was the Iranian student movement Daftar Tahkim Vahdat continues its campaign for justice. Charged with inter alia propaganda against the system, acting against national security, insulting the Supreme Religious Leader and insulting the President, a member of their council, Bahareh Hedayat, was in May sentenced to nine and a half years' imprisonment.

Shirin Alam Hooli, a 28-year old Kurdish woman was arrested, imprisoned and finally convicted of 'enmity against God'. Following her arrest she was routinely and repeatedly subjected to torture and degrading treatment and was sentenced to death for her alleged support for the PJAK, a militant opposition group.

Shirin had no access to legal

representation during her long and gruelling interrogation and her legal rights were denied her. In June of this year Shirin Alam Hooli was executed.

At 82 Simin Behbahani is Iran's leading woman poet who has recently written poems in support of the opposition campaign against the results of last year's elections. All set to fly to Paris to present a paper on feminism and to read her poetry at a conference, Simin was intercepted at Tehran airport and told that she could not leave the country. Her passport was confiscated and she was interrogated for several hours before being told she would have to appear in court.

Simin Behbahani is a close friend of Shirin Ebadi the Nobel peace prize winner who has been living in exile since the elections. On 10 June 2010 Shirin Ebadi was made an honorary citizen of Paris. In her acceptance speech she stressed that "in Iran the protestors will be victorious".

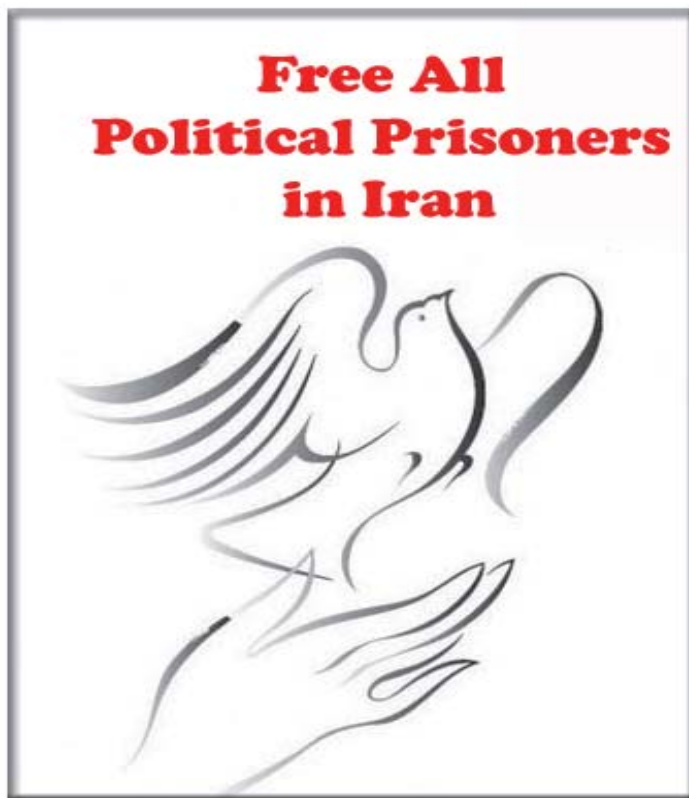
The courage of the women protestors in Iran is formidable : there is no doubt that in their fight they will be victorious but at the price of how many young lives?

## CODIR addresses Peace Conference in New York

On the weekend before the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference at the United Nations in New York, the 2010 people's International Conference for a Nuclear-Free, Peaceful, Just and Sustainable World, was held on April 30th and May 1st 2010 in New York City, United States. More than 800 delegates from around the world participated in the plenary sessions and workshops of the conference.

The Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in the Middle East was co-sponsored by CODIR. Issam Makhoul of the Emil Touma Institute for Palestine and Israel Studies and a previous member of Knesset, and Phyllis Bennis from the Institute for Policy Studies (Washington, DC) were among the other panellists (and co-sponsors) of this workshop.

Nazar Habib, CODIR's North American representative at this important conference, attended two of the workshops as a panellist and speaker, Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in the Middle East and National Struggles Against the Violence of Global Imperialism. The full text of the speech of CODIR's representative delivered in this workshop could be found at:  
<http://www.codir.net/>  
under CODIR Says section.



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