



Iranian political prisoner

Jafar Panahi

Born July 11, 1960 in Mianeh, Iran.

Jafar Panahi is a world-renowned filmmaker. He received the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival and the Silver Bear at the Berlin Film Festival for his movies *The Circle* (2000) and *Offside* (2006), respectively. *The Circle* depicts the situation of women in Islam and has been banned by the regime. In *Offside*, Panahi illustrates the journey a group of young Iranian girls who dress as boys and attempt to sneak into a soccer stadium in violation of the regime's ban on women attending matches.

In 2009, Jafar was President of the Jury of the Montreal World Film Festival. Although Jafar was named as a member of the jury at the Cannes Film Festival in 2010, he was unable to attend because of his imprisonment. To draw attention to his case and send a strong signal to the Iranian regime, his chair was kept empty. At the 2011 festival in Cannes, Jafar will be awarded the Carrosse d'Or for his courage and independent thought.

Jafar was an early supporter of Iran's Green Movement, and he often appeared at international film festivals wearing a green scarf to show this support. During the flawed presidential election in 2009, he supported Mir Hossein Mousavi. On July 30, 2009, Jafar participated in the protests at Behesht-e-Zahra cemetery near the grave of Neda Agha Soltan, the 26-year old woman who was gunned down by government forces during protests in 2009. Jafar was arrested and released a few days later. On March 1, 2010, while Jafar was filming a movie at his home, he was arrested a second time, along with 17 of his colleagues and his wife and daughter. The Iranian government claimed Jafar was making a film that was "anti-regime," by depicting the protests following the 2009 elections. Tahereh Saeedi, Jafar's wife, has denied this accusation. Jafar was released on bail for \$200,000 on March 25, 2010 as a result of international pressure. His arrest is one of many in a clear pattern of government intimidation against Iran's artistic community.

On December 20, 2010, Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court sentenced Jafar to 6 years in Evin prison and banned him for 20 years from making films, writing screenplays, giving interviews, and leaving the country. Charges against him include "assembly and colluding with the intention to commit crimes against the country's national security and propaganda against the Islamic Republic." He plans to appeal.