



Droits et Démocratie
Rights & Democracy

**PEN Canada joins with Rights & Democracy to present
a discussion with Iranian writer and dissident Akbar Ganji**

November 6th, 2007

For immediate release – Akbar Ganji, Honorary Member of PEN Canada and courageous Iranian journalist and dissident who spent six years in prison for exposing rights abuses committed by Iran, is the winner of Rights & Democracy's 2007 John Humphrey Freedom Award.

Akbar Ganji will be in Toronto on Monday, November 26 from 6:00 to 7:30pm at the George Ignatieff Theatre (Trinity College, 15 Devonshire Place). The event will feature an on-stage interview with Anna Maria Tremonti, host of CBC Radio's The Current. A free admission event, organized by Rights and Democracy and PEN Canada in collaboration with The Munk Centre for International Studies.

Akbar Ganji

Mr. Ganji's fearless commitment to human rights, democratic development and non-violence is an inspiration and source of hope to his fellow Iranians. A journalist by trade, Mr. Ganji's work has appeared in pro-democracy newspapers across Iran, most of which the government has since shut down. He has also written 10 books, including the bestselling *The Dungeon of Ghosts* (1999) and *The Red Eminence and The Grey Eminence* (2000).

In April 2000, Mr Ganji was sentenced to six years in Tehran's notorious Evin prison on charges of "propaganda against the regime and its institutions." The charges stemmed from a series of investigative articles exposing the complicity of then President Rafsanjani and other leading members of the conservative clergy in the murders of political dissidents and intellectuals in 1998. During his time in jail, Mr. Ganji endured solitary confinement and finally a hunger strike that lasted from May to August 2005. He also continued to write, producing a series of influential political manifestos and open letters calling for Iran's secularization and the establishment of democracy through mass civil disobedience. The works were smuggled out of Evin and published on the Internet. A collection of his writings in English will be published next year by the University of California Press.

John Humphrey Freedom Award

Named in honour of John Peters Humphrey, who prepared the first draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Rights & Democracy presents the John Humphrey Freedom Award each year to an organization or individual from any country of the world, for exceptional achievement in the promotion of human rights and democratic development.

Rights & Democracy

Rights & Democracy is a non-partisan, independent Canadian institution created by an Act of Parliament in 1988 to promote, advocate and defend the democratic and human rights set

out in the International Bill of Human Rights. In cooperation with civil society and governments in Canada and abroad, Rights & Democracy initiates and supports programmes to strengthen laws and democratic institutions, principally in developing countries. More details at: www.dd-rd.ca

PEN Canada

PEN Canada is a centre of International PEN that campaigns on behalf of writers around the world persecuted for the expression of their thoughts as guaranteed in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In Canada, it supports the right to free expression as enshrined in Section 2(b) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. More details at www.pencanada.ca

Contact

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