

# PEN CANADA

for FREEDOM of EXPRESSION



Siamak Pourzand

Iranian intelligence services abducted journalist and film critic Siamak Pourzand on November 24, 2001, and for more than three months no information was released about his whereabouts or details of charges against him. On March 6, 2002, Iranian judicial authorities started closed and unannounced proceedings against Pourzand. He was sentenced to eleven years in prison on April 13, 2002, on charges of "undermining state security through his links with monarchists and counter-revolutionaries". The sentence was reportedly confirmed on May 21, 2002, following an appeal by his court-appointed lawyers.

It is widely believed that the charges against him are based on "confessions" that are thought to have been exacted under duress. Pourzand reportedly admitted to the nine charges against him, confessing that he had been in contact with people close to Reza Pahlavi, the son of the late Shah, who was ousted in 1979. Pourzand also reportedly admitted to working for the Shah's secret service before the revolution.

Pourzand was re-arrested on March 30, 2003, after being conditionally released in December 2002. He was jailed after being summoned by the Adareh Amaken, a section of the Tehran police customarily tasked with "moral" offences.

The targeting of Pourzand is thought to be connected to his position as manager of the *Majmue-ye Farrhangi-ye Honari-ye Tehran*, a cultural centre for writers, artists and intellectuals, or to his articles critical of the Islamic regime.

On April 18, 2004, Pourzand was admitted to the cardiac care unit of Tehran's Modares Hospital following a reported heart attack on March 30. He was reportedly chained by his feet to the hospital bed. Pourzand is reported to have undergone surgery on his spine on May 23. As of April 2005, Pourzand has been on conditional medical leave from prison. Every two weeks, he is required to submit to the medical office at Evin a medical report on his condition. Family members have secured a small apartment for him in Tehran. The charges against Pourzand remain.

**PEN Canada considers the charges against Siamak Pourzand to be in violation of his right to freedom of expression, as guaranteed by Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Iran has ratified. PEN Canada calls for the immediate and unconditional release of Siamak Pourzand from prison. We also call upon the Iranian authorities to provide Pourzand with access to a lawyer, his family, and any necessary medical treatment while in detention.**

Please send appeals to:

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