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Jahanbegloo returns to Canada a free man



IranTimes:Ramin Jahanbegloo, an Iranian-Canadian philosopher jailed in Evin for 125 days and then allowed to travel to India, has now returned to Canada. In April 2006, Jahanbegloowas at Mehrabad airport awaiting his flight to an academic conference in Belgium when authorities arrested him. Jahanbegloo was blindfolded and brought to Evin prison, the same prison where Iranian-Canadian Zahra Kazemi was detained and then later died under suspicious circumstances pointing to torture in 2003. Jahanbegloo said his meals in prison consisted of bread, tea, rice and occasionally some meat or vegetables. He said he got used to sleeping three hours a night on the floor of his two-by-three-meter solitary cell. His "bed" was made of four blankets, two on top and two underneath him. Jahanbegloo said there was a 24/7 light that beamed down on him disrupting his sleep, butalso providing the only light for his incessant writing. He said he wrote on tissue boxes and biscuit containers that he would buy with his own money. Jahanbegloo, 50, said he was never physically tortured during his stay at Evin, but he considered his imprisonment itself to be torture. Jahanbegloo said he still is

unsure as to why he was arrested, but some believe his arrest came in response to an article he wrote criticizing the regime's questioning of the Holocaust. Even after Jahanbegloo was finally released in August 2006, Iranian officials continued to hold the threat of a trial over him. The trial never came. More than a year-and-a-half later, Jahanbegloo and his family are moving back to Canada. In interviews with the Canadian media, Jahanbegloo said, "When you go through a lot of pain, you always need some kind of therapy. Teaching at the university is going to be good therapy for me." Jahanbegloo said he will continue writing a book he began, but never finished, on Iran and modernity. Jahanbegloo said he finds the issue of modernity an important one for the Middle East. He said Middle Eastern countries have suffered either modernization from above—as in the case of the Shah—or a harsh enforcement of anti-modern fundamentalism from below—as with the Taliban. "Iranians, like Arabs, have not been able to digest modernity because they did not find a way to create a permanent dialogue between the two concepts. It's either created authoritarian modernity or authoritarian traditionalism." He continued, "This is what I think is so important to people of the Middle East, particularly Turks, Iranians and Arabs. They want to keep their own identity. They want to be proud of their past. But it's very important to open up to other cultures. Democracy is a result of this. Democracy is a government of dialogue." Jahanbegloo is just one of several dual citizens who have been arrested and detained by Iran. Kian Tajbakhsh, Haleh Esfandiari, Ali Shakeri and Parnaz Azima are all dual Iranian- Americans who were arrested and jailed in Iran, but who have since been released. Currently, a French-Iranian dual citizen Mehrnoushe Solouki, 38, is still forbidden to leave Iran, although she has been released from prison. She was arrested last February when she stumbled upon a mass grave of political dissidents executed by Iran in 1988.

Iranian helping fruit flies live much longer



By: Grace Nasri
IranTimes:Mahtab Jafari, an Iranian-American pharmaceutical science professor at the University of California at Irvine, has discovered a plant that extends the lifespan of fruit flies. Most people aren't especially interested in extending the lives of fruit flies. But Jafari says her work may just help extend the lives of people, as well.Jafari, 40, and her team of researchers conducted a study in which fruit fly populations were fed diets supplemented with four herbs known for their anti-aging properties. The herbs were mixed with a yeast paste, which the flies ate for the length of their lives. Three of the herbs proved to have no effect on increasing fruit fly longevity. Rhodiola, which comes from the Rhodiola

Rosea plant, was found to reduce mortality in fruit flies by 10 percent. On average, Rhodiola increased longevity by 3.5 days in males and 3.2 days in females. The average lifespan of a fruit fly rarely exceeds one month. Jafari said her research does not yet prove Rhodiola will have the same effect on humans, but said the plant is a promising candidate for further study. "Although this study does not present clinical evidence that Rhodiola can extend human life, the finding that it does extend the lifespan of a model organism, combined with its known health benefits in humans, makes this herb a promising candidate for further anti-aging research. Our results reveal that Rhodiola is worthy of continued study, and we are now investigating why this herb works to increase lifespan." Rhodiola rosea, which is native to Europe and Asia, has been used by traditional healers for centuries. Soviet studies also discovered the anti-aging properties of the plant, concluding the plant improved the body's response to stress. The studies, however, have still not been translated from Russian. Jafari was born in Tehran but moved to France after the Iranian revolution. She received her baccalaureate in biology from Lycee Masena in Nice while learning French. Jafari and her family immigrated to California in 1987, where Jafari decided to study pharmacology. She attended community college in San Diego with hopes of going to the

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Second 'suicide' in prison found highly suspicious



IranTimes:Ebrahim Lotfallahi, a 27-year-old Kurdish law student, was found dead in the Sanandaj detention center earlier this month. This is the second claimed suicide by a detainee in the past few months, and both families are calling for investigations. Lotfallahi, a Kurdish law student, died in the detention center in Sanandaj sometime between January 9 and January 15. Zahra Bani-Yaghoob, a 27-year-old physician, died in October while

in custody in Hamadan. Officials claim the cause of death in both cases was suicide. The families of the dead do not agree. Joe Stork, Middle East deputy director at Human Rights Watch, said, "The sudden death in detention of two apparently healthy young people is extremely alarming. The government only heightens our concern by quickly dismissing them as suicides." Witnesses say Lotfallahi was arrested January 6, after he had finished taking an exam at the Sanandaj campus of Payam Noor University. Lotfallahi's parents are still unclear as to why their son was arrested. Three days after his arrest, Lotfallahi's family visited him in the Sanandaj detention center. His brother, Ismail, told Human Rights Watch Ebrahim was in good spirits and seemed normal during the visit. On January 15, officials from the detention center informed Lotfallahi's parents that they had buried Lotfallahi in a local cemetery; officials

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Satrapi nominated for animated Oscar

By: Warren L. Nelson
IranTimes:Marjane Satrapi received an Oscar nomination for her movie "Persepolis" in the category of best animated feature film. A major surprise, however, was that "Kite Runner," about an Afghan family that flees its homeland, received no nominations in any category whatsoever, not even in any of the technical categories. Hossein Ershadi, the Iranian actor who plays the father of one of the boys at the heart of the film, had been widely touted as a possible nominee for best supporting actor. Satrapi's "Persepolis" won the nomination despite the fact that it is in French. Foreign language films are normally confined to the ghetto of the foreign language category. They are always eligible for other nominations, but only in a few very rare instances has a foreign language film been seen as so outstanding as to warrant nomination in any major category. Satrapi's Oscar nomination is the ninth to go to an Iranian in the past 12 years. No Iranian received any Oscar nominations before 1997, but there has been a flood since then. None of the nominees, however, has yet won an Oscar. The nine nominations have been in eight different fields, showing the wide penetration by the Iranian community in all aspects of film, from acting to writing to sound editing to special effects. The oddest nomination, however, may well be this year's to Satrapi, who would never call herself a creature of the cinema, like all the other Iranian Oscar nominees. She is a writer of graphic novels, who had an idea about turning her books into a movie—and on her first effort has pocketed an Oscar nomination. Most Oscar categories draw five nominations. But the animated feature film category is open only to three nominees. The others this year are "Surf's Up," about penguin surfers, and "Ratatouille," about a Paris rat who is bored by the sewer life and becomes one of the great chefs of France. "Ratatouille" has been rated

by many critics as the greatest animated film of all time, both for its technical precision and its story development—a hurdle that may prove impossible for "Persepolis" to top. "Persepolis" is highly rated for its story and character development, but its animation is very simple and basic. Of the nine Oscar nominations to Iranians, five have gone to Iranian-Americans, two to British-Iranians, one to a French-Iranian (Satrapi), but only one to an Iranian—the director Majid Majidi for his



film "Children of Heaven" in the best foreign language film category in 1999. "Children of Heaven" is the only film by an Iranian ever to garner a nomination for best foreign language film. This year, Iranians actually had three bites at getting a nomination in that category. In addition to the submission from Iran ("M for Mother," directed by Rasul Mollagholipur), the French submission was "Persepolis" and the Iraqi submission was "Jani Gal," which was directed by Iranian Jamil Rostami. The nominees this year are from Israel, Austria, Poland, Kazakhstan and Russia. With three of the nominees from the former Soviet bloc, some commentators suspected the latest film fad was moving in that direction. Hollywood has traditionally gone through fads of interest in films from certain regions for several years before shifting elsewhere.

Iranian Oscar nominees

Year	Nominee	Film	Category
1997	Habib Zargarpour	Twister	Special effects
1997	Darius Khondji	Evita	Cinematography
1998	Hossein Amini	The Wings of the Dove	Screenplay
1999	Majid Majidi	Children of Heaven	Best Foreign Lang. Film
2000	Mehdi Nowruzian	Killing Joe Live	Action Short
2001	Habib Zargarpour	The Perfect Storm	Special effects
2004	Shohreh Aghdashloo	House of Sand and Fog	Best Supporting Actress
2007	Kami Asgar	Apocalypto	Sound Editing
2008	Marjane Satrapi	Persepolis Animated	Feature film