

## Regime padlocks Ebadi's rights office

Iran Times: One year after announcing that Shirin Ebadi's human rights office was being closed, police marched into the office last month, tossed everybody out and padlocked the doors. The action against the Nobel laureate brought instant criticism from the United States, the European Union and human rights groups around the world. Ebadi won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003. The prize came with a gift of \$1.4 million. Ebadi used that money to buy a building in Tehran and set up her Human Rights Defenders Center. Last month, the center was planning a ceremony to mark the 60th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights and to honor Taqi Rahmani, 48, who spent 17 years—more than a third of his life—in the Islamic Republic's prisons on charges of seeking the overthrow of the Islamic Republic. Dozens of police, both uniformed and plain clothes, marched in and confronted the staff. Narges Mohammadi, Ebadi's deputy, said the police refused to show a search warrant. "A policeman told me he was not obliged to show a warrant because he was wearing a police uniform," she related. The government repeated what it said last year when it ordered the center closed. It said Ebadi lacked a license to operate a political organization. Ebadi last year said she lacked a license because the government never acted on her application. Mohammadi said a plainclothes officer shouted insults at her and threatened her. She said other officers pulled him away while he continued to shout, saying, "If you were not a woman, I would drag you by the legs and throw you into the street." Mohammadi said the police filmed the offices, made an inventory, pushed everyone out, padlocked all the entrances and shooed away the people who had begun arriving for the planned ceremony. She said one man was beaten by the police. Ebadi said the closure would change



nothing. "Shutting down our offices won't make us stop our human rights activities. We will meet again somewhere else and will continue to support the rights of activists and political prisoners," she told the Associated Press. There was no word on why the authorities had waited a year after banning the organization to close the office. Some thought the delay stemmed from concern over international reaction at action against a Nobel laureate. Some speculated the Sunday closure was prompted by an Ebadi speech last month that directly challenged a major tenant of the Islamic Republic by insisting the principles enshrined in the 1948 UN Declaration on Human Rights are universal and are not Western cultural standards, as Tehran insists. The building also houses another organization that Ebadi founded to focus on landmine clearance. That office was also closed.

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### Surgeon found...

My concern was to ensure Ruben would not suffer. No one was taking care of him," the defendant said. But Karen Gray, the San Luis Obispo deputy district attorney who tried the case, claimed it was a conflict of interest for Roozrokh—the transplant surgeon—to oversee care for the patient and said he ordered excessive amounts of morphine and the sedative Ativan. Defense attorney Schwartzbach, however, called an expert witness who said the dose was not excessive and another expert who came from Ohio to testify, saying he wanted to prevent harm to the practice of organ transplantation. The case prompted the United Network for Organ Sharing last year to implement guidelines

for cardiac-death donation and required 257 transplant hospitals and 58 organ procurement groups to do the same. Before that, any guidelines came from individual hospitals or groups. Although his name has now been cleared, it is unknown whether Roozrokh—who was on paid leave—will return to his job, although Schwartzbach said he talked with his client's employers who indicated they want him to return. "It's too early to tell what he will do," Schwartzbach said. "This has been an enormous ordeal for him. He'll need some personal R&R [rest and relaxation]." Goran B. Klintmalm, a former president of the American Society of Transplant Surgeons, said, "I think we must acknowledge the sensitivities of the events on the ground and extend our sympathies for the surgeon. Nobody can give him back the three years he's lost, both personally and professionally."

## Iranian-Canadian writes chilling memoir

Iran Times: An Iranian-Canadian woman has written a chilling memoir about her experiences being jailed and tortured as a young student activist in Iran and forced into marriage with one of her captors. On January 15, 1982, Marina Nemat, who was 16 at the time, was arrested by the Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guards) at her Tehran home and taken to Evin prison. Nemat's problems, as detailed in her memoir, "Prisoner of Tehran," began two years earlier when she had asked a preachy school teacher to cut out the politics and stick to calculus. When Nemat was ordered to leave the classroom, she said, most of the other students followed her in solidarity. Nemat became increasingly active, attending rallies protesting the Islamic regime and writing for a dissident student newspaper. When many of her friends began to be arrested, her boyfriend, Andre—an electrical engineering student—urged her to flee the country. But Nemat had nowhere to go. At Evin, Nemat says she was whipped until she became unconscious and sentenced to death during a secret trial. Just before she was scheduled to be shot, she was rescued by a guard named Ali; she had met him on the night of her arrest. Ali had fallen in love with her and offered his hand in marriage. Nemat had no choice. She said Ali had threatened that if she refused or tried to commit suicide, he would hurt her parents and Andre. Nemat was also forced to pretend to convert publicly to Islam; she was a Christian. Nemat and Ali were married July 23, 1982, at Ali's parents' home. After a brief "honeymoon," Nemat was sent back to prison and put in solitary confinement so Ali could visit and spend nights with her. According to Nemat, 90 percent of her fellow prisoners were under the age of 18. "It was high school and hell," she explained. But shortly their marriage, Ali was fatally shot in what Nemat suspects was a feud among prison officials. But Ali's parents helped secure Nemat's release from Evin six months after their son's death and 26 months after her initial arrest. Nemat recalled that Ali's family had treated her well, and one day told her that Ali himself had been tortured in prison during the time of the Shah. "My torturer husband had been a victim like me. That was horror at its highest point... The world is not divided in good and evil. I, as a victim, could one day become a torturer. That shocked me out of my wits." Soon after being released from prison, Nemat and Andre were married in a Christian church—despite her mother's disapproval of their marriage. Six years later, on August 28, 1991, the couple and their two young sons moved to Canada and settled in Aurora, near Toronto, where Nemat wrote her memoir. For the first nine years after arriving in Canada, Nemat found herself too busy to think about her past as she tried to adapt to a new country. In addition, one of her sons had recurring health problems, her parents came from Iran to live with her and her mother fell gravely ill. The family had little money, and Nemat's initial job flip-



ping burgers at McDonald's didn't help much. In 2000, Nemat's mother died of cancer. After the funeral, she told The Toronto Star, her community gathered at her home. She remembered sitting beside her father when he leaned toward her and said, "Nemat, your mother forgave you before she died." At that moment, Nemat recalled to The Toronto Star, she snapped. During her research about the effects of torture on children, Nemat had talked to psychologists. One explained that victims put their trauma in a bubble, on their shoulder, and they walk through life with that burden. "Anything that threatens the bubble to burst, you avoid. You are protecting that bubble with your life," she said. "Sitting next to my father that day, the bubble burst." She remembered that she started to scream uncontrollably. "And it wasn't just screaming like people do in grief. It was a manic kind of screaming. I couldn't breathe and I couldn't ask for help because I was screaming. So I started running," Nemat said. And then she collapsed. An Iranian doctor friend ran to her side, shaking her and yelling, "Look at me! And shut up!" Nemat said she began getting bad headaches and had nightmares—signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. "I realized I have to fix this. So I started writing," she said. I was just thinking about it all the time, remembering every single detail, everything," Nemat told Alberta's Edmonton Journal. "It really took over my life." So Nemat went out and bought some notebooks and began writing about her experience in prison, she wanted the world to know her story. She realized thousands of people had been jailed, tortured and executed at Evin and that many memoirs by these prisoners had already been published abroad in Persian, but she wanted her memoir to be written in English. "I wanted everybody to know. I wanted the world to know." Today, "Prisoner of Tehran" has been published in 23 countries, translated into 20 languages and is on the black market in Iran. Nemat is currently working on her second book about the effects of torture on children. "As a survivor, you can never live happily ever after. It is your duty to put what you have witnessed to good use. There is no other way," Nemat said.

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**(408)866-9147**  
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