

Baha'is shown 'great kindness'

IranTimes: Prosecutor General Qorban-Ali Dorri-Najafabadi says the Baha'is in Iran are respected and treated with "great kindness." "The Iranian government has provided the Baha'i sect in Iran with all the facilities offered to other Iranian citizens," Najafabadi told Iran's PressTV Monday, despite the fact that the Baha'i faith is not recognized like the Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian faiths and is officially repressed. The prosecutor general's remarks came in response to claims from the West that the Islamic Republic has violated the rights of Iran's 300,000-member Baha'i community. The Iranian cleric denied any unequal treatment, saying Baha'is were respected in Iran, but pointed to what he called irrefutable evidence that many members of the sect have strong ties to Israel and other adversarial countries. "We have always showed great kindness to the Baha'i citi-

zens in Iran. We just oppose such relations [with countries Iran considers enemies]," he explained. "We [as the state] offer a variety of services to the Baha'i sect in Iran and respect them as human beings, but not as insiders, spies, or a political grouplet supported by Britain and Israel to cause disturbances in Iran," Najafabadi said. Last Wednesday, Tehran Deputy Prosecutor Hassan Haddad announced that seven administrative leaders of the Baha'i faith, who are accused of spying for Israel and insulting Islam, were set to be tried shortly. Responding to news of the arrests, officials in Canada, Germany, Britain and the United States joined international groups such as Amnesty International, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and Freedom House in voicing their concern for the treatment of Iran's Baha'is.

Top salesman gets very top award

IranTimes: Mehdi Fakharzadeh has been honored with the MetLife Lifetime Achievement Award, an honor only previously awarded to two of MetLife's top financial services representatives. MetLife created the Lifetime Achievement Award to recognize those individuals who have surpassed all current recognition awards and have made significant contributions to MetLife, the Insurance and Financial Services Industry and their clients. The Lifetime Achievement Award is reserved for those who have distinguished themselves as sales leaders in the insurance field, and served as mentors to others. Fakharzadeh previously earned the firm's Award for Excellence seven times and was recognized 35 times at the Chairman's Council and 44 times at the President's Conference. The eighty-seven-year-old Fakharzadeh continues to work as a senior account executive with MetLife's Wealth Financial Group, and makes 30 to 40 speeches annually. He has spoken in over 51 coun-



tries in his lifetime. Fakharzadeh had also written two books, including "Nothing is Impossible" and "Everything is Possible." Fakharzadeh holds a masters in economics from Brigham Young University in Utah and currently lives in Teaneck, New Jersey, with his wife, Sigrun.

Sufi mosque bulldozed

IranTimes: Iranian security forces have bulldozed a Sufi house of worship of the Gonabadi dervishes in Esfahan. Sufism is not illegal in the Islamic Republic, but its popularity has grown by leaps and bounds in recent years and many in the religious establishment view Sufism as a threat. Radio Farda reported that after midnight on February 18, about 200 police arrived at the Sufi place of worship, arresting five of the Gonabadi dervishes inside and destroying or confiscating much



of the hossainiyeh's property. According to the report by the U.S. government-owned Radio Farda, Sufis in Esfahan recently expressed concern after the reported demolition of several other dervish sites throughout Iran. Gonabadi dervishes reportedly feared their place of worship might be the next target. In a preventive effort, several local dervishes began spending the night at the hossainiyeh to keep watch. But their efforts proved futile when they faced 200 Iranian police. Police reportedly confiscated the dervishes' cellphones to prevent them from informing others of the raid. The five Sufis detained were re-

leased after the raid was completed. Abdol Saleh Loghmani, one of the local dervishes, told Radio Farda the security forces cut off water and electricity to the area, and bulldozed the walls around the tomb of one of Sufism's revered poet's, Nasser Ali. "They also destroyed the library where [religious] books were kept. They demolished the big hall where we had our Monday and Friday ceremonies and also our Sunday dawn meetings. They took away

all the carpets and other property," Loghmani told Radio Farda. Three years ago, a Sufi house of worship was demolished in Qom; another was partially destroyed in Borujerd in 2007; and a Sufi prayer house in Kish was ordered shut late last year. Sufism adheres to Islamic tenets

but puts an emphasis on mysticism and spirituality; some conservative authorities in Iran view the sect as a threat to establishment Islam. Dervishes said the increase in popularity of their sect is one of the reasons behind the growing state pressure. But they say many Iranians are turning toward Sufism because they are tired of the official state interpretation of Islam. "These demolitions ... demonstrate the oppression and crimes that are being committed against religious minorities in Iran—when they treat dervishes who are Shiite Muslims in this manner," he told Radio Farda.

Makhmalbaf moves to France with his family

IranTimes: Film director Mohsen Makhmalbaf left Iran and moved to France with his family four months ago in the face of increasing censorship from Tehran. Agence France Presse reported Makhmalbaf's move. The director surfaced last month at a film festival in France when he screened several of his and his family's films, many of which are banned in Iran. In 2005, his "Kandahar," which was notably screened at Cannes in 2001, was banned in Iran; the director's 2005 film "Sex and Philosophy," which premiered in France, was also banned in Iran. Makhmalbaf was then forced to close his film school. Once in France, Makhmalbaf was invited to screen his work at the Vesoul Asia Filmfest, which concluded February 17. "There are only two ways to escape censorship [in Iran]," Makhmalbaf told Agence France Presse: "Making films abroad or pressuring the Iranian authorities by talking about censorship." Martine Therouanne, head of the film festival, said it was a paradox that Tehran "does not want Iranians seeing their films, but do not mind Westerners discovering Iran through these same films." Makhmalbaf's filmmaker wife Marziyeh Meshkini, and their prizewinning daughter-directors, Samira and Hana—all of whom have had their films shown at top European film festivals—joined Makhmalbaf at his screening. The Iranian director said, "Sex, violence and politics are censored [in Iran], which is why filmmakers have tried to develop a new school, a poetic style." The director said the outlook for reduced censorship in Iran does not look promising, even if the elections in June produce a new president. "The president is only the second top figure in Iran, the first being Supreme Leader Ali Khamenehi.



Everything depends on him." Makhmalbaf is not the only director to be slapped by censorship; Abbas Kiarostami, Abolfazl Gjalidili, and the entire Makhmalbaf family has at some point been hit by the censors. "My family's movies have been seen in some 50 countries, but are censored in our land," said Makhmalbaf, who told Agence France Presse several of his scripts have been censored by Tehran during the past five years. The filmmaking family said the censors had changed their lives. "You can't even say I live in Iran," said 19-year-old Hana Makhmalbaf. "I spent a year in Afghanistan shooting my last film ["Buddha Collapsed Out of Shame"] and then traveled across the world to show it." Meshkini, Makhmalbaf's wife, said that "the same way there are doctors without borders, there are artists without borders." Hana presented "Buddha Collapsed Out of Shame" at this month's Vesoul festival and at the Berlin Film Festival, where it won a Crystal Bear award. But her film, along with her mother's award-winning 2004 film "Stray Dogs," remains banned in Iran.

'Funny in Farsi' may be made into television serial

Iranian-American author Firoozeh Dumas has announced that ABC Television will film a pilot program based on her best selling novel "Funny in Farsi." According to a posting on Dumas' website, the pilot is "the first step in



a long process. If they like the pilot, it will become a series." In other words, no decision has been made to put the program on the air, but there is enough interest to invest money in filming a "pilot" or test program. The best

selling memoir documents the journey of Dumas' family, which emigrated from Iran to Southern California in 1972. The story involves her Fulbright scholar father, an idealistic dreamer who first sought to get rich quick in Las Vegas and later lost his engineering job during the Iranian revolution; her elegant mother, who never fully mastered English; her uncle, who loved American fast food but simultaneously combated its effects with weight-loss products; and Firoozeh herself, who as a girl changed her name to Julie and encountered a second wave of culture shock when she met and married a Frenchman. Four years after her 2004 bestseller came out, Firoozeh published "Laughing Without an Accent," a comical book about being a citizen of the world. Firoozeh Dumas was born in Abadan and moved to Whittier, California, when she was just seven. Two years later, she and her family moved back to Iran and lived in Ahvaz and Tehran. But again, two years later, the family moved back to Whittier, then to Newport Beach. Firoozeh then moved to Berkeley, where she attended the University of California at Berkeley.

Adult and Community Education-Citizenship Classes

Sunnyvale-Cupertino Adult and Community Education offers two evening citizenship classes. They are an ESL/Citizenship Preparation Class, for those students who are at an intermediate level of English proficiency, and a Citizenship Preparation Class, for students who are advanced English speakers. Both of these free classes, which are held on Monday and Wednesday evenings, start on Monday, March 23, 2009 and end on Wednesday, May 27, 2009. The ESL/Citizenship Class, whose hours are from 6:30-9:30 p.m., is in room 82, at Fremont High School. The Citizenship Class is from 6:30-8:30 p.m., in room 83, at Fremont High School. In these classes students will learn about American history and government, fill out the N-400 application, and practice for their oral interview. In addition, there will be several speakers who will talk about the naturalization process, local government, and voting.

We also offer two Saturday morning ESL/Citizenship classes: one for beginning English speakers from 9:00 a.m. -11:00 p.m.; a second for intermediate English speakers from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Both of these classes are held at Templo el Monte Horeb (in room 1 on the second floor), 455 E. Maude Avenue, in Sunnyvale. These classes start on March 28, 2009 and end on May 30, 2009. Students can register in class on any Saturday morning. (There are no classes on May 23, 2009.) In addition, on Saturday, April 25, 2009, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m., we will be offering a special one-day class, ESL/Citizenship Interview Preparation, to help prospective citizens prepare for their interview. Volunteers from the community will act as interviewers. At this class there will also be an immigration expert who will talk about the interview process and answer questions.

The class will meet in the Cafeteria at the Adult Education Center, 591 W. Fremont Avenue, Sunnyvale.

For all of these classes, students should register in class. For more information about these classes or for ESL/Citizenship at Home, please call (408) 522-2703.

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آیا حتی وقتی که گرسنه نیستید غذا می خورید؟
آیا به طور غیر قابل کنترلی زیاد می خورید؟
آیا وزن شما روی طرز زندگی تان اثر گذاشته است؟
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