



## AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

May 18, 2006

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei  
Supreme Leader  
Islamic Republic of Iran  
c/o H.E. Javad Zarif  
Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary  
Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations  
Fax: 212-867-7086

Your Excellency:

We are writing on behalf of the 14,000 members of the American Sociological Association (ASA), a scientific society of academic and professional sociologists, to request that Dr. Ramin Jahanbegloo, a prominent Iranian intellectual and philosopher arrested in late April by the Iranian government, be freed. We urge you to use your good offices to determine the circumstances of his detention and to secure his immediate release, and otherwise ensure his permanent right to freedom of thought, opinion, and speech.

As a party to the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, Iran is required to provide among other rights to its citizens, the: (1) Right to hold opinions without interference (Article 19.1); (2) The right to freedom of expression; this right includes freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds (Article 19.2); and (3) Citizens are entitled to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law (Article 14). Under the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Article 23), individuals also have the right to freedom of thought, opinion, and speech. As a scientific organization, with an international membership, ASA is committed to ensuring academic freedom, free exchange of ideas, and free expression, to all scholars including those conducting research on sociological and related comparative studies of culture and social institutions. Without governmental assurance of such intellectual freedoms, a nation quickly becomes universally recognized as failing to ensure superior scholarship and unwilling to protect its intellectual status in international cultural and scientific arenas.

Dr. Jahanbegloo's work is highly respected by scholars around the world including those in Iran. Having studied and taught at major universities in Europe and North America, including the Sorbonne, Harvard University, and the University of Toronto, he is an internationally prominent public intellectual, and his publications (in Persian, French, and English) on European and Iranian intellectual history and political philosophy are extremely important as Iran moves

toward implementing the universal principles of the International Convention to which it is a signatory.

We are profoundly dismayed by the seemingly arbitrary and secretive nature of Dr. Jahanbegloo's arrest as reflected by the fact that, apparently, no formal charges have been filed against him. Our membership of sociologists from many countries is not alone in its deep concern over Dr. Jahanbegloo's arrest, which, by its covert nature, suggests it does not live up to its obligations to its own scholars under the International Convention. As a scientific society, we are particularly concerned that compromising the pursuit of knowledge, as Dr. Jahanbegloo's arrest does, undermines Iran's educational and cultural vitality as well as its national and international economic and political stature.

We are hopeful that under your leadership Iran will respond to avoid the grave harm this damage to intellectual and scientific pursuits in your country will do to Iran. We appreciate your consideration of our concern about of this apparent breach of Iran's commitments under International Conventions, and we urge you to ensure that all false or politically-based charges against Dr. Jahanbegloo will be dropped. The leaders and members of the American Sociological Association consider this to be a matter of great urgency.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, PhD  
President, American Sociological Association



Sally T. Hillsman, PhD  
Executive Officer, American Sociological Association