

*The International Society for Iranian Studies*  
*Committee for Academic & Intellectual Freedom*  
**(ISIS-CAIF)**

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**To: Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the UN**

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

**The International Society for Iranian Studies--Committee for Academic & Intellectual Freedom (ISIS-CAIF) *highly commends*** Your Excellency for your August 19, 2005, letter addressed to Iranian authorities, expressing your continued concern with the well-being of the jailed Iranian journalist **Mr. Akbar Ganji**. In the letter, you appealed to Iranian authorities for Mr. Ganji's immediate release.

"Mr. Ganji, a renowned Iranian investigative journalist, has been under arrest since April 2000, following his return from a conference at the Heinrich Böll Institute in Berlin. He was sentenced in January 2001 and, after an appeal court overturned his initial sentence, he was once again tried and condemned in July 2001. He was ultimately sentenced to six years imprisonment on grounds of his journalistic exposé (in 2000) of the serial murders of 5 opposition intellectuals by members of the Iranian security forces in 1998, as well as for the views he had expressed at the Berlin conference. Ganji remains a *prisoner of conscience*, serving a sentence for no more than his *peaceful* expression of views and journalistic activities. His case has been documented extensively by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Reporters Without Borders, International PEN, and International Freedom of Expression Exchange, among numerous other independent international organizations."

On July 28, 2005, an open letter appeared in the *New York Times* (page 11) imploring your intervention on behalf of Mr. Ganji, who had begun a **hunger strike** on June 11 in protest of his unwarranted confinement since April 2000 and his mistreatment and lack of

adequate access to medical care during detention. The letter was endorsed by **ISIS-CAIF** and the **International Committee in Support of Akbar Ganji** and was accompanied by a petition signed by various independent, non-partisan, international organizations and hundreds of concerned journalists, academics, artists, writers, intellectuals, and defenders of human rights from around the world. At the time, Mr. Ganji's plight already had attracted tremendous domestic and international outpouring of sympathy and solidarity. Expressions of concern with Mr. Ganji's ordeal (both inside Iran and internationally) merely mounted around the time of the *New York Times* letter, ranging from thousands of individual well-wishers around the world to 16 Noble Laureates, various chapters of International PEN, Reporters Without Borders, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the European Union, among many other governmental and non-governmental groups and individuals. *Yet, Iranian authorities stubbornly refused to reconsider Mr. Ganji's case.*

Subsequent to the *New York Times* letter, two separate delegations to Your Excellency's office were made by representatives of the International Committee in Support of Akbar Ganji, to further acquaint you and your staff with Mr. Ganji's case. On August 2, your office issued a statement of concern with Mr. Ganji's health and his continued confinement, *underscoring your exemplary and unflinching commitment to promoting international human rights.*

On August 3, tens of thousands of concerned individuals around the world participated in peaceful acts of protest and vigils during the international day of solidarity with Akbar Ganji, called for by various independent human rights organizations, including the International Committee in Support of Akbar Ganji.

On August 19, you made yet another personal appeal on behalf of Mr. Ganji in a letter addressed to the new Iranian president, Dr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. By that time reports of Mr. Ganji's health were extremely alarming. Having already completed 70 days on hunger strike, for the previous 3 weeks he had been at the Intensive Care Unit of Milad hospital (the hospital to which he was transferred in July). Moreover, Iranian authorities for sometime had refused visitation rights to Mr. Ganji's family and legal representatives, the latter restriction in clear violation of Iranian law.

Following your August 19 appeal, Iranian authorities stated on August 22 that Mr. Ganji's case may merit a legal review. On the same day, Mr. Ganji's wife announced that he had ended his hunger strike in response to the authorities' more conciliatory attitude.

**However**, after Mr. Ganji terminated his hunger strike, **Iranian authorities did not fulfill the pledge to review his case.** Instead, *he was returned to Evin prison* on September 3 and has since been placed in *solitary confinement* at a notorious "special wing" of the prison, being allowed only one brief visit from one of his lawyers and his wife on October 17 (the first and only visitation right granted to his wife since August 28). Additionally distressing are the increasing reports of Mr. Ganji's critically poor health and his having been subjected to *severe beating* by Iranian security forces at Milad hospital--after ending his hunger strike and prior to being transferred back to prison--,

because of Mr. Ganji's refusal to apologize for his past expressed views. Mr. Ganji's continued illegal detention and further *inhumane treatment* has led to renewed calls for his immediate release by independent international organizations such as Reporters Without Borders (October 24) and Amnesty International (October 27).

*We extend our deepest gratitude to Your Excellency* for your continued concern with Mr. Ganji's condition and your steadfast resolve in recommending his unconditional release to Iranian authorities. We are of the firm conviction that *your intervention* on Mr. Ganji's behalf was a **pivotal** factor in compelling Iranian authorities to publicly announce on August 22 their willingness to adopt a more pliant and compassionate stance in dealing with Mr. Ganji's case, which unfortunately turned out to be a barren promise.

*We hope you will continue to demand the immediate and unconditional release of Mr. Ganji* and will urge Iranian authorities to take steps toward **full respect for human rights and freedom of expression**, as well as *the immediate and unconditional release of all other prisoners of conscience*, including one of Mr. Ganji's legal representatives, the *human rights lawyer* **Mr. Abdolfattah Soltani**, who was arrested on July 30, 2005, and is kept in solitary confinement.

Moreover, **we ask that you emphatically raise these concerns in your meetings with Iranian officials during your upcoming planned visit to Iran.**

*With our utmost appreciation of Your Excellency's dedication to human rights and freedom of expression around the world,*

The Steering Committee of  
**The International Society for Iranian Studies  
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