

## A FILM BY JAFAR PANAHI

Jafar Panahi is a dear friend of mine. A soul mate during much of my turbulent film making career in Iran. He is an admirable colleague. An inspiration to future generations of filmmakers. Jafar Panahi holds a unique position as an artist. An artist who doesn't only express his art through art but also through his life as a human being. A citizen of a country where decency, human dignity, respect for individual liberty and the right of mankind to be, has been sold for a most vulgar world view. A view that plagues our collective community not only as artists, but as human beings residing on this earth.

The Islamic Regime and their thugs know no shame. Over the past thirty years, they have demonstrated repeatedly that they have no shame no matter how they are reincarnated or interpret themselves. There is not much we can do to shame them out of the inhumanity they exercise with increasing ferocity. A vicious ferocity that is not limited to the last eighteen months to which point it has escalated over three decades. Shame on us if our elected representatives sit at any negotiating table with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Shame on us if by now we have not learned that they are beyond reform, negotiation or respect.

Jafar Panahi is a filmmaker who lives his work and works his life into his art. I have heard and read that the six year prison and twenty year ban declared recently against him is a death sentence. It is a death sentence on those who issued that sentence. It is a death sentence on a rotting world view that believes the sound and images of humanity can be suppressed by their sick ideology. Six years in prison and twenty years ban on expression is not enough. I wish it was an eternal sentence that behold a regime with no sense of shame or dignity. I am confident that the Islamic regime in Iran will not last as long as the sentence they have imposed on Jafar Panahi but meanwhile, we must keep hope alive for those suffering heroically in their dungeons.

I invite all of our colleagues and friends in the film community throughout the world to join Jafar Panahi in his call for humanity, liberty and dignity. I look forward to the day when as long as Jafar is not able to exercise his craft as an artist, every film shown in every film festival in the world is preceded with the title: A film by Jafar Panahi.

Babak Payami  
December 21, 2010