



“Women and Presidential Elections in Iran”

(Zanan va Entekhabate Riasate Jomhoori)

a Talk by:

Ms. MehrAngiz Kar

(Prominent Iranian Lawyer, Activist, and Expert in Women/Human Rights)

“Iranian Government vs. Independent Civil Organizations”

an Introduction by:

Dr. Ali Taalebinezhad

(Founder and Director of *Shirin Science Center*, an Influential Iranian NGO)

Sunday, May 17, 2009

5 pm Sharp!

MIT Room 4-237 (Building 4, 2nd floor)

Organized by:

[MIT Iranian Cultural Group](#)

Program Summary:

- Screening a set of short but informative video clips about the power, struggle and challenges of Iranian women;
 - Introduction by Dr. Ali Taalebinezhad;
 - Formal talk by Ms. MehrAngiz Kar;
 - Open question and answer session.

**For detailed/updated information about this event,
and the biographies please visit:**

<http://shirin-center.org/download/mehrAngizKarTalkMIT17May2009.pdf>

with thanks to Kodoom.com for announcing this event at:

<http://events.kodoom.com/en/organizer/MIT-Iranian-Cultural-Group-2643293>

Biography of Ms. MehrAngiz Kar

MehrAngiz Kar is an attorney, writer and activist working toward the promotion of democracy, the rule of law and human rights within the framework of Islamic law in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Despite her efforts, and being frequently impeded and curtailed by the intelligence services of the Islamic Republic, she has been an active public defender in Iran's civil and criminal courts, and has published regularly in several influential and independent Iranian journals. Banned from making public appearances within her country, including conferences, radio and television, *Ms. Kar* has used international forums as a platform for voicing her opinions and advocating for the democratic, political, legal, constitutional and human rights of the Iranian people. In April of 2000, following to her participation in a **Symposium in Berlin**, she was arrested and imprisoned on the charges of “*acting against the national security of the Islamic Republic of Iran*”. Three of the five charges against her are still pending, for which she may again be arrested upon her return. In 2008 she was a *visitor scholar at the New House Center for Humanities at Wellesley College* and is currently a **visiting fellow at the Human Rights Program at Harvard Law University**. For more information about *Ms. Kar*, especially her intriguing and detailed biography, please visit her website at: <http://www.mehrangizkar.net>

Biography of Dr. Ali Taalebinezhad

Ali Taalebinezhad was born in a middle class family in Iran (a housewife mother and a bank accountant father). He entered “**Aryamehr University of Technology**” in Tehran during the **Shah** regime, experienced the pain and uselessness of “*Islamic Cultural Revolution*” (3-year closure of all Iranian universities, mainly advocated and headed by **AbdolKarim Soroush**) and graduated after the revolution during **Khomeini** reign from “**Sharif University of Technology**”. Despite being academically eligible (being on the top of his graduating class), he was denied scholarship for graduate studies due to “not being favorable” by the Islamic Regime of Iran which had already started the crack down of dissidents.

Immediately after getting his BS, he received full scholarship from **MIT** where he obtained his MS and PhD degrees with theses in the areas of Robotics and Computer Vision at *Artificial Intelligence Laboratory* (currently *CSAIL*) and then conducted his postdoctoral work at the *Canadian Institute for Robotics and Intelligent Systems*. He is currently doing research and development in the areas of automation and computer vision.

In the year 2000, *Dr. Taalebinezhad* started his major philanthropic work by establishing “**Shirin Science Center**” for the advancement of Science, Technology, and Culture among the young generation in Iran where he was spending at least every summer. This independent and non-governmental organization which was exclusively financed by him, without receiving any financial support from any individual and organization inside or outside Iran, soon became one of most influential organization of its kind in Iran in many fronts.

Besides offering hundreds of free classes and seminars, *Shirin Science Center* was providing its 100+ million-tooman equipments with the help of 100+ professional staff to 1,500+ of its registered members free-of-charge. One of the most important features of *Shirin Science Center* has been the emphasis on *no-gender-bias* by providing *real and equal opportunities to women and men at all levels*, from its board of directors to staff and members. This has been a very unique and *successful social experience in running a fully coed institution in Iran*.

Due to the independence and fast growth of *Shirin Science Center*, *Dr. Taalebinezhad* was under constant intimidation by the Iranian authorities from the beginning but they could not legally do much about his legitimate organization. At the end of summer 2006, the local authorities, who had received more green lights for their illegal actions after the conservative **Ahmadinejad** administration came to power, had decided to close down *Shirin Science Center*. As a result, *Dr. Taalebinezhad* was illegally arrested on the charges of “*acting against the national security of the Islamic Republic of Iran*” in August 2006 and imprisoned without bail due to the fabricated complaints filed against him by the local *head of Police, Sepah, Information, Judiciary, and the Governor*. He was released from the prison after being forced to sign a letter “not to disclose anything about his arrest and the *Shirin Center* closure to anyone and do not try to reopen or promote the center”. Not getting any response from Iranian Government figures (from **Khameneyee** to **Ahmadinejad** and many in between), he put the full account of the events on the internet, shortly after coming back to the US, and created a weblog for staying in touch with *Shirin Science Center* community in Iran. You can read more about the detailed sequence of events by visiting:

<http://shirin.mit.edu/blog/?p=760>