**Iran director Jafar Panahi 'on hunger strike' in prison**

Jafar Panahi has gone on hunger strike until he can see his lawyer

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BBC

*http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/middle\_east/10127322.stm*

The internationally acclaimed filmmaker Jafar Panahi has begun a hunger strike to protest at his imprisonment in Iran, opposition websites say.

The writer and director was arrested in March along with members of his family.

The Iranian authorities have clamped down on dissenting voices since protests flared over the disputed elections last June.

The director, known for his social realism, has made several films critical of Iran's regime.

He has won awards at the Venice and Berlin Film Festivals, and was due to be acting as a judge at the ongoing Cannes film festival in the south of France.

Mr Panahi's family were released shortly after their arrest, but he was taken to Evin prison in Tehran.

Demands

His wife, Tahereh Saeidi, told the opposition Rahesabz website the director had informed her by phone that he had stopped eating and drinking until he was allowed to see his family and a lawyer.

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Jafar Panahi

Film director

The Opposition Jaras website also said Mr Panahi went on hunger strike following an interrogation where he was accused of filming his cell.

"I have not eaten or drunk since Sunday morning and will continue... until these demands are met," The Jaras website quoted him as saying.

Last year a travel ban was imposed on Mr Panahi by the authorities after he appeared wearing green - the colour of opposition supporters - at the Montreal film festival.

He was also briefly arrested after attending a memorial to student Neda Agha Soltan, killed at an opposition rally last June.

His most recent film is Offside, which won the 2006 Berlin Film Festival's Silver Bear award.

It tells the story of a group of female football fans who try to sneak into Iran's World Cup qualifying match against Bahrain but are arrested.

In Iran, women are banned from attending men's sporting events.

At least 30 protesters have been killed in clashes since last year's disputed elections, although the opposition says more than 70 have died. Thousands have been detained and some 200 activists remain behind bars.

At least nine have been sentenced to death, and two have been executed already.

Some of those arrested include former ministers and the sister of Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi.