

# Tehran blackmailed an Iranian filmmaker into cancelling a film screening in Canada

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Iranian filmmaker Abdolreza Kahani was pressured by the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance to cancel a film-screening for his film *Delighted* (2016) in Canada, reports the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI). *Delighted* was banned in Iran due to its challenges against traditional gender roles.

Award-winning director Abdolreza Kahani is no stranger to government censorship, out of the 25 films that were banned in the last decade alone, four directed by him. Those of his films that have been screened in Iran have also been cut down. His films regularly push boundaries surrounding questions of gender and sexuality.

Nor is he silent about censorship. On July 6th, 2017, he wrote a tweet criticising the Ministry of culture for not lifting the ban on his film *Delighted*. "The Ministry of Culture must keep its promises" he tweeted "after a year, we are still waiting for *Delighted* to come out in Iran".

Initially, Kahani aimed to have *Delighted* screened in domestic cinemas but his film was soon banned. In order to recoup the money that went into production, he hoped to screen it in Canada, the UK, Germany, the Czech Republic, Australia, France and then he planned to finally sell it to Netflix.

But at the beginning of this journey, the Guidance Ministry sent him a 'polite recommendation' for the not to be screened in cinemas abroad, a move that was interpreted as a threat.

"If the screening had gone ahead, his new film, 'We like you Mrs. Yaya', which was very expensive to make, would not get a permit for screening in Iranian theatres" a source close to Kahani told CHRI.

Speaking to Journalist Alijani Ershad for France 24, Kahani has long been chased by the Iranian Government for his films, especially when they reach critical acclaim on the international stage. In fact, sometimes there have been films that have been allowed to be screened domestically but have been banned internationally. Speaking on his award-winning film "Twenty", he complained about how

"they banned International broadcasting for the four films I made later. They even banned the sending of these films to festivals. If I did it anyway, they would forbid me to make other films in Iran. They explained to me that the social problems that I showed could be shown to the Iranians, but that there was no reason to show them to foreigners".

Kahani, who has resided in France since 2013 has directed 10 films. His films "*Nothing*" (2010), "*Absolutely Tame is a Horse*" (2011), "*Needlessly and Causelessly*" (2012), and "*Delighted*" (2016) have all been banned.