

GASTVORTRAG

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(Composer)

Memoirs Untold: A Personal Glimpse at Human Rights and Music in Iran since 1979

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Since the 1979 revolution, Iran has witnessed human rights atrocities against those who are deemed as "others". Others refers to an ever-widening population of religious and racial minorities, women and youth right activists, and, in fact, anyone who thinks differently from the pronounced and enforced official ideology. These people are law-abiding citizens who are not only deprived of their most basic rights to freedom of speech, expression and thought, but even their rights to education and work have been fully suppressed. Moreover, many have had their properties and belongings confiscated, and are condemned to multi-generational imprisonment and, beyond all comprehension, also the insidious threat of personal harm and persecution, entirely because of their religious beliefs.

As in most societies, cultural control has been used as a political tool. And music specifically has been subject of fierce political and religious debate in Iran since the establishment of the Islamic Republic. For a few years, following the 1978 revolution, all concerts, radio and television broadcasts of music were banned.

This account is the personal story of a composer and his experiences arising from a ban on music, on his work, and his witness to the severe human sufferings of fellow Iranians. The focus of his testimony rests on the personal effect and individual responses to those volatile circumstances, and is examined from three perspectives: passive, reactive and proactive.