

# NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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## DEMANDS FOR FREE PRESS AND FREE SPEECH DRIVE UNREST IN IRAN A PROGRAM OF THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER IN CONJUNCTION WITH *ONE BOOK, ONE PHILADELPHIA*

Philadelphia, PA (February 12, 2010) – Journalist **Maziar Bahari** and **Dr. Hamid Dabashi**, Professor of Iranian Studies at Columbia University, will join the National Constitution Center on Thursday, March 4, 2010 at 6:30 p.m. for a conversation about the growing unrest in Iran and the future of free speech and a free press in the Islamic Republic. Admission is free, but reservations are required by calling 215.409.6700.

This program is presented in conjunction with the Free Library of Philadelphia's *One Book, One Philadelphia* initiative, which has chosen Marjane Satrapi's *The Complete Persepolis*, a memoir of growing up as a girl in revolutionary Iran, as the 2010 featured selection.

Article 27 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran entitles its citizens to peaceful assembly, but protests over the re-election of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad have escalated into deadly conflict. With the suppression of media in Iran, and restrictions on foreign journalists from reporting on Iran's post-election demonstrations, Twitter accounts, YouTube videos, and cell phone cameras have become the only tools for broadcasting reports of conflict to the rest of the world. Questions about the authenticity of these reports threaten the prospects of a free press and citizen journalism in Iran.

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## ADD ONE/FREE PRESS AND FREE SPEECH IN IRAN

Maziar Bahari is an award-winning Canadian-Iranian documentary filmmaker, playwright, editor, journalist, and writer, who was detained in Iran on June 21, 2009, and held in solitary confinement in Tehran's notorious Evin prison following Iran's disputed presidential elections. Iranian state press claimed that Maziar had "confessed" to unwittingly playing a role in a Western media effort to instigate unrest after the presidential elections. He was released on October 17, 2009, and is currently an international correspondent for *Newsweek* magazine. Maziar's accomplishments were honored as a finalist for the prestigious 2009 Prince of Asturias Award for Concord. His nomination was supported, among others, by Nobel Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu and former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

Born in the southwestern city of Ahvaz in the Khuzestan province of Iran, Hamid Dabashi received his college education in Tehran, before moving to the United States, where he received a dual Ph.D. in Sociology of Culture and Islamic Studies from the University of Pennsylvania in 1984, followed by a postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard University. He is currently the Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. Professor Dabashi is a current affairs essayist, analyst, and commentator in major international newspapers and periodicals. He is regularly featured on CNN, BBC, CBC, and Al Jazeera, and his essays regularly appear in *al-Ahram Weekly* in Egypt, *Bir Gun* in Turkey, and CNN in the United States.

The National Constitution Center, located at 525 Arch St. on Philadelphia's Independence Mall, is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of the U.S. Constitution and the ideas and values it represents. The Center serves as a museum, an education center, and a forum for debate on constitutional issues. The museum dramatically tells the story of the Constitution from Revolutionary times to the present through more than 100 interactive, multimedia exhibits, film, photographs, text, sculpture and artifacts, and features a powerful, award-winning theatrical performance, "Freedom Rising". The Center also houses the Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach, which serves as the hub for national constitutional education. For more information, call 215.409.6700 or visit [www.constitutioncenter.org](http://www.constitutioncenter.org).

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