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Bilingual Lecture Series on Iran

present

The Cyrus Cylinder and the Rights Question

A lecture in Persian by **Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi**, Professor of History and Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations, University of Toronto

Sunday, November 8, 2015

4:00 PM

121 Dodd Hall

"The Cyrus Cylinder and the Rights Question" explores the interplay between historical memory, social rights and contested conceptions of government and constitutionality in the four decades prior to the 1979 Revolution. Offering a corrective to the ideological and linear revolutionary narratives of Pahlavi Iran, this historical inquiry elucidates how a multi-confessional conception of Iran and its constitutionally sanctioned "equality rights" of citizens was conceived at "a moment of danger" during WWII when Iran was invaded by the Allied forces and Reza Shah Pahlavi (r. 1925-1941) was forced to abdicate. Exploring the intersection of an emerging human rights legal discourse and a multi-confessional civilizational narrative, it explains the historical specificity of how the Cyrus Cylinder emerged as a "foundational text" and authorized the inaugural theme of a rights-based civilization in Iran.

Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi is Professor of History and Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations at the University of Toronto. He has served as President of the International Society for Iranian Studies (2008-10), was the founding Chair of the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Toronto-Mississauga (2004-07), and was the Editor-in-Chief of *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* (2001-12), a Duke University Press journal. Since 2010 he has served as the Editor-in-Chief of *Iran Nameh* and is coeditor with Homa Katoouzian of the Iranian Studies book series, published by Routledge. In addition to numerous articles, he is the author of two books: *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography* (Palgrave, 2001) and *Tajaddud-i Bumi [Vernacular Modernity]* (Nashr-i Tarikh, 2003). He is currently completing a manuscript that explores the discursive transformation of modern Persian political language from biopolitics to spatial governance. It traces the shift from a restorative rhetoric of medical sciences to the constructional language of engineering.

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