

Tuesday, May 18, 2010

# Embassy Row

[James Morrison](#)

## 'ONE-SIDED SUPPORT'

After speakers at the Cato Institute praised his courage for promoting freedom in Iran at the risk of life, **Akbar Ganji** criticized U.S. policy in the Middle East, especially Washington's support for Israel, and denounced economic sanctions against the regime that arrested and tortured him.

The journalist, jailed for writing articles critical of the theocracy in Tehran, last week received the Milton Friedman Prize for Advancing Liberty and the \$500,000 cash award that accompanies the honor.

In his acceptance remarks, Mr. Ganji, who was released from prison in 2006, criticized the policies of former **President George W. Bush** and former **British Prime Minister Tony Blair**, the chief U.S. ally in the liberation of Iraq and Afghanistan. He also said **President Obama** has become "entangled" in many of the same policies.

"The people of the Middle East feel threatened by the U.S. and the West," Mr. Ganji said, criticizing Washington's "one-sided support for Israel."

He also complained of the U.S. applying a "double standard" in its opposition to the spread of nuclear arms, while "ignoring Israel's stockpile of nuclear weapons."

Mr. Ganji warned that the West's "ever-continuing [verbal] attacks" on Iran's nuclear program is "detrimental to the democratic movement" that grew after the fraudulent Iranian elections last year.

"The regime will use the threat of [military] attack to crush the democratic movement," he said.

Mr. Ganji also criticized U.S. efforts to apply additional economic sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program.

"Those who believe in free-market principles ... should oppose sanctions," he said.

**David Boaz**, the executive vice president of Cato, said the annual Friedman prize is awarded "so the world will not forget the importance of freedom."

Conservative columnist **George Will**, the keynote speaker, warned that Greece may be only the first of several European countries to face economic collapse because of a bloated bureaucracy and crippling social-welfare policies.

He noted that the "anti-government mobs" rioting in the streets of Athens "are comprised of government employees."

**Edward H. Crane**, Cato's founder and president, also held up Greece for ridicule.

"If Greece keeps going the way it's going," he quipped, "it's going to end up another California."

## CHILE'S ENVOY ROCKS

Chile's new center-right president is sending a rock 'n' roll lawyer to Washington to serve as ambassador.

**President Sebastian Pinera** surprised **Arturo Fermandois** when he selected him to be Chile's envoy to the United States, the new ambassador told reporters in Santiago.

Mr. Fermandois said his top priority will be to work on plans for a visit to Chile by **President Obama**. The new ambassador told the Santiago Times that Mr. Pinera has invited Mr. Obama to come to the South American nation.

"Nothing has been confirmed, but they have spoken about it between the two of them and apparently it is a good option," Mr. Fermandois said.

Mr. Fermandois served as an adviser to Chile's government during talks on the North American Free Trade Agreement in the 1990s and serves as a negotiator for the Arbitration and Mediation Center of the Santiago Chamber of Commerce.

In addition to his professional duties, the new envoy plays electric guitar in his own rock group, Rockasaurios.

Mr. Fermandois replaces **Jose Mario Goni**, a political appointee of former socialist **President Michelle Bachelet**. Mr. Goni served less than a year in Washington.

- *Call Embassy Row at 202/636-3297 or e-mail [jmorrison@washingtontimes.com](mailto:jmorrison@washingtontimes.com).*

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