

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Names
2002		28	Iran	Hashem Aghajari, historian
	2004			<i>follow-up 4</i>
	2003			<i>follow-up 3</i>
	2002			<i>follow-up 2</i>
	2002			<i>follow-up 1</i>

Announcement

The American Association for the Advancement of Science reports that the death sentence against historian Hashem Aghajari (see NCH#28, #28ii, #28iii, #28iv) has been reimposed. Please see the NCH summary below and the AAAS update. We hope that you can send the recommended urgent appeals immediately. Please remember to write in your professional capacity. Thank you.

NCH SUMMARY

In August 2002 Hashem Aghajari (1957–), historian and head of the history department at Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, member of the reformist Islamic Revolution’s Mujahideen Organization (IRMO), and close ally of President Mohammad Khatami, was arrested on charges of apostasy and blasphemy (defamation of religious figures and Shiite Islamic traditions), following an address he delivered in Hamedan, western Iran, the previous June. His speech, entitled *Islamic Protestantism*, commemorated the death in June 1977 of the ideologist of the Iranian Revolution Ali Shariati and called for a “religious renewal” in which Muslims should not “blindly follow religious leaders” (thereby challenging the Shiite doctrine of emulation or *taqlid*). During a closed trial in November, he was sentenced to 74 lashes, eight years’ imprisonment—to be served in “internal exile”—and the death sentence. He also received a ten-year prohibition from teaching. Aghajari was amputated at the knee during the 1980–88 Iran–Iraq war and needed medical attention. Hundreds of university students and lecturers protested against the sentence. On 2 December Aghajari’s lawyer appealed against the death sentence (against Aghajari’s wish) after on 17 November Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had ordered Iran’s chief judge to review it. In February 2003, the Supreme Court repealed the death sentence and a retrial was ordered. In July, the death sentence was commuted to four years’ imprisonment. Aghajari also appealed against this sentence. On 15 February 2004, in an open letter from prison, Aghajari urged passive resistance in protest at the ruling by the Council of Guardians to bar some 2,500 pro-reform candidates from standing in the 19 February elections. On 3 May 2004, the Hamedan court reimposed the death penalty and sent the case back to the Supreme Court. Aghajari prepared a Persian edition of

the travel diary of Ibrahim Beg, a late-nineteenth-century imaginary account of the travels of a reformer through Iran. In 2003 he was a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize.

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION NETWORK (AAASHRAN)

IRAN: ACADEMIC'S DEATH SENTENCE REIMPOSED

6 May 2004 -- Case number: ir0219_agh -- Victim: Hashem Aghajari -- Issue: Freedom of opinion and expression

FACTS OF THE CASE:

On 4 May 2004, the New York Times and the BBC reported that the a regional court has reimposed a death sentence against Dr. Hashem Aghajari, a professor of history and a prominent human rights dissident. Dr. Aghajari was originally sentenced to death in November 2002 for apostasy for a university lecture he gave in which he rejected demands to "blindly follow" clerical rule and called for reform within the Islamic clerical establishment. In February 2003, the Supreme Court had lifted the death sentence.

The original death sentence prompted an outcry from liberal sectors of Iran and the international community. The sentence also touched off some of the largest protests by university students in years. The unrest following the verdict promoted Iran's highest ruler Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to take what is considered an extremely rare step of ordering the Supreme Court to review the case. Iranian President Mohammed Khatami has issued statements in support of Dr. Aghajari. The case is considered to be part of the ongoing struggle between liberal reformists aligned with President Khatami and hardliner seeking to uphold strict interpretations of Islam.

Dr. Aghajari's lawyers will appeal the reinstated sentence. Dr. Aghajari is currently at Evin prison in Tehran.

(Sources of information for this case include: The New York Times and NEAR International <<http://www.nearinternational.org/>>.)

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Please send faxes, letters, or emails:

Urging the government to immediately and unconditionally release Dr. Hashem Aghajari as it appears that he is being persecuted for exercising his right to freedom of expression as guaranteed under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party; and

Calling on the judicial authorities to implement a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, which as cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment is prohibited under Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

APPEAL AND INQUIRY MESSAGES SHOULD BE SENT TO:

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahrudi
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Park-e Shahr
Tehran
Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: 011 98 21 879 6671(Attention: Director of Internat’’)
Email: <irjpr@iranjudiciary.com> (Attention: HE Ayatollah Shahr)
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Hojjatoleslam val Moslemin Sayed Mohammad Khatami
President of Iran
The Presidency
Palestine Avenue
Azerbaijan Intersection
Tehran
Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: <khatami@president.ir>
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei
Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Presidency
Palestine Avenue
Azerbaijan Intersection
Tehran
Islamic Republic of Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES SENT TO:

His Excellency Kamal Kharrazi
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Sheikh Abdolmajid Keshk-e Mesri Av
Tehran, Islamic
Republic of Iran
Fax: 011 98 21 390 1999 (Attention: Human Rights Dept.)
Salutation: Dear Mr. Minister

Iranian Interests Section
c/o Embassy of Pakistan
2209 Wisconsin Ave NW
Washington DC 20007
Fax: 1 202 965 1073

Please send copies of your appeals, and any responses you may receive, or direct any questions you may have to Victoria Baxter, AAAS Science and Human Rights Program, 1200 New York Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20005; tel. 202-326-6797; email: <vbaxter@aaas.org>; or fax 202-289-4950.

The keys to effective appeals are to be courteous and respectful, accurate and precise, impartial in approach, and as specific as possible regarding the alleged violation and the international human rights standards and instruments that apply to the situation. Reference to your scientific organization and professional affiliation is always helpful.

To ensure that appeals are current and credible, please do not continue to write appeals on this case after 90 days from the date of the posting unless an update has been issued.

AAAS Human Rights Action Network

<http://shr.aaas.org/aaashran>

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This message was circulated to persons on the Network of Concerned Historians (NCH) mailing list. You have been included on this list either because you indicated your wish for updates on the NCH, or because it was suggested to us that you or your organization might be interested in this initiative. If at any time you would like to be removed from the list, simply send us a reply stating your request. Please also feel free to contact us if you have any questions, comments, or concerns. You can reach us at the following address: <a.h.m.de.baets@let.rug.nl>.

For more information you may also visit the NCH website at: <<http://www.let.rug.nl/nch/>> or mirror: <<http://dit.is/nch>>

We invite you to forward information about NCH to other individuals and organizations who may be interested.