

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

### *Announcement*

Today, Human Rights Day, International PEN is circulating a second update in the case of historian Hashem Aghajari, after his lawyer appealed against his death sentence. Please find below first NCH's case summary, then PEN's update. We hope that you can send the recommended urgent appeals immediately. Please remember to write in your professional capacity.

### **SUMMARY OF THE CASE**

In August 2002, Hashem Aghajari (1957-), historian and head of the history department at Tehran's Tarbiat Modares University, member of the reformist Organization of Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution, and close ally of President Mohammad Khatami, was arrested on charges of apostasy and defamation of religious figures and Shiite Islamic traditions, following a speech he gave in Hamedan, western Iran. His speech, entitled Islamic Protestantism, reportedly called for a "religious renewal" in which Muslims should not "blindly follow religious leaders", and commemorated the death in June 1977 of Ali Shariati (1933–77). During a closed trial in November, Aghajari 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 Ayatollah Ali Khameni had ordered Iran's chief judge on 17 November to review it. Aghajari edited in Persian the travel diary of Ibrahim Beg, a late-nineteenth-century imaginary account of the travels through Iran of a reformer.

[Note: On Ali Shariati, see NCH #5, #6, #10, #23]

[Sources include: American Association for the Advancement of Science Human Rights Action Network, IR0219-agh, 12 November 2002; Amnesty International, Urgent Action Appeal 330/02 (7 November 2002); Article 19, Death Sentence on Iranian Academic Violates Freedom of Expression, 18

November 2002; Juan Cole, "The Historian Who Has Been Sentenced to Death" (WWW-text; 18 November 2002); International PEN Writers in Prison Committee, Rapid Action Network 55/02 (London), 12 & 27 November 2002, 10 December 2002.]

## **RAPID ACTION NETWORK--10 December 2002--Update #2 to RAN 55/02**

### **IRAN: Academic Hashem Aghajari appeals against death sentence**

On 2 December 2002 Hashem Aghajari's lawyer Saleh Nikbakht was reported to have filed an appeal on his behalf against the death sentence handed down to the academic for apostasy on 9 November 2002. Aghajari himself had reportedly refused to appeal his sentence, challenging the judiciary to carry it out. The appeal follows the decision of Ayatollah Ali Khameni to order Iran's chief judge to review the academic's death sentence, reportedly issued following protests by hundreds of university teachers and students [see RAN 55/02 and Update #1]. Aghajari was also sentenced to 74 lashes of the whip, eight years' imprisonment and internal exile, and a 10-year prohibition from teaching, all of which may still be applied if the death penalty is abandoned.

International PEN:

Reiterates its satisfaction at the reconsideration of the death sentence permitted by Ayatollah Khameni and expresses its confidence that the sentence will be commuted;

Remains concerned that Dr Aghajari has been convicted solely for the expression of his views, with reference to Article 19 of the ICCPR which guarantees the right to freedom of expression;

Therefore urges that all sentences against Dr Aghajari be overturned and that he be freed.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS:**

Welcoming the Ayatollah's decision to order the reconsideration of the death sentence recently handed down to Professor Hashem Aghajari;

Expressing grave concern that Aghajari's health is rapidly deteriorating and that he may not be receiving the correct medical attention in detention;

Urging the Iranian authorities to commute the death sentence handed down to Professor Aghajari and overturn all sentences against Dr. Aghajari in accordance with their obligation to protect the right to freedom of expression as guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

**SEND APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khameni  
The Presidency  
Palestine Avenue  
Azerbaijan Intersection  
Tehran  
Islamic Republic of Iran

His Excellency Hojjatoleslam Sayed Mohammad Khatami  
The Presidency  
Palestine Avenue  
Azerbaijan Intersection  
Tehran  
Islamic Republic of Iran

Please note that there are no fax numbers available for the Iranian authorities, so you may wish to ask the diplomatic representative for Iran in your country to forward your appeals. It would also be advantageous to ask your country's diplomatic representatives in Iran to intervene in the case.

For further information, please contact NCH.