

PUBLIC

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Further information on EXTRA 13/98 (MDE 13/03/98, 5 February 1998) and follow-ups (MDE 13/13/98, 30 July 1998; MDE 13/04/99, 22 February 1999) - Death Penalty/Flogging

IRAN Helmut Hofer, aged 58, German businessman
Vahideh Ghessemi (f), medical student

Helmut Hofer is reported to have left Iran today and returned to Germany.

Helmut Hofer, who was arrested and imprisoned in September 1997, had been sentenced to 99 lashes followed by death, after he was convicted of having had sexual relations with a Muslim Iranian woman, Vahideh Ghessemi. His death sentence was quashed by the Supreme Court in July 1998, but reinstated by the court of first hearing in October, at which time Vahideh Ghessemi was sentenced to 100 lashes. It is not clear whether her sentence was carried out.

Hofer's case was again referred to the court of first hearing for a retrial in February 1999, and he was freed on bail two months later. He was rearrested in August 1999 and accused of "having links to foreign elements", of which he was later acquitted. In October 1999 he was fined the equivalent of US\$23,000 as a substitute for the 99 lashes. He was also charged with insulting a prison guard, for which he was fined the equivalent of a further US\$6,600 in January 2000, before he was released and permitted to leave the country.

No further action is required. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.