

PUBLIC

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Further information on EXTRA 13/98 (MDE 13/03/98, 5 February 1998) and follow-up (MDE 13/13/98 30 July 1998) - Death penalty/Flogging

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

The death sentence passed on Helmut Hofer has reportedly been overturned by Iran's supreme court.

Helmut Hofer, who was arrested and imprisoned in September 1997, was sentenced to death after he was tried and convicted in January 1998 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 in October by the court of first hearing, which at the same time sentenced Vahideh Ghessemi to 100 lashes. It is not clear if this sentence has yet been carried out.

It appears that Helmut Hofer's case has again been referred to the court of first hearing for a retrial. Although it is unlikely that he will again be sentenced to death, he may still receive a prison sentence and/or flogging if found guilty.

Amnesty International will continue to monitor the situation and to keep the Urgent Action network informed of developments in this case. No further action is required at present. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.