

**IRANDr Seyyed Hashem Aghajari (m), aged 45, writer and academic**

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Prisoner of conscience Dr Seyyed Hashem Aghajari, a history professor at Tehran's Tarbiat Modares University, is at threat of execution.

He was arrested on 8 August following a speech he gave on 19 June in Hamedan, western Iran. His speech, entitled "Islamic Protestantism" reportedly called for a "religious renewal" in which Muslims should not "blindly follow religious leaders".

According to media reports on 7 November, Dr Seyyed Hashem Aghajari was sentenced to 74 lashes, eight years' imprisonment - to be served in "internal exile" - and death following a closed trial in Hamedan, on 6 November. He faced vaguely worded accusations consisting of defamation and insult charges, notably of religious figures and leaders. Dr Seyyed Hashem Aghajari's lawyer has indicated that he will appeal against the death penalty; he has 21 days in which to do so.

According to his family, Dr Seyyed Hashem Aghajari is in urgent need of medical attention to his right leg, amputated at the knee during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war. His leg is apparently bruised and infected and he is reportedly unable to stand up, walk or use the prison's hygiene facilities.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Vaguely worded laws, open to abuse, restrict freedom of expression and opinion and frequently do not amount to recognizably criminal offences. Prisoner of conscience, Hojjatolislam Hassan Yousefi Eshkevari was sentenced to death in 2001 on similar charges following an unfair trial in a special court. It was reduced to two and a half years (please see Amnesty International's Annual Report 2002 and UAs MDE 13/22/00, 9 August 2000 and MDE 13/016/2001, 21 May 2001); in October 2002, a sentence of seven years' imprisonment was handed down in connection with separate charges.

To date, Amnesty International has recorded 97 executions in 2002, although the true figure may be much higher. In 2001 Amnesty International urged the authorities to urgently consider a moratorium on executions in line with UN recommendations (AI Index MDE 13/031/2001, 17 August 2001).

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty as the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Article 6 (4) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iran is a state party. It states that "Anyone sentenced to death shall have the right to seek pardon or commutation of the sentence."

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:**

- urging the death sentence and all other penalties passed on Dr Seyyed Hashem Aghajari be suspended immediately or commuted on appeal;
- urging the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, to commute the death sentence passed, in line with Article 6 of the ICCPR;
- calling on the authorities to allow Dr Seyyed Hashem Aghajari to receive medical treatment;
- urging the judicial authorities to implement a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, which is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment prohibited

under Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to which Iran is a state party, with a view to its eventual abolition;  
 - calling for Dr Seyyed Hashem Aghajari's conviction to be overturned and that, if he is charged with recognizably criminal offences, he be tried according to internationally accepted standards for fair trial;

**APPEALS TO:**

Leader of the Islamic Republic

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

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**Email: [webmaster@wilayah.org](mailto:webmaster@wilayah.org); (on the subject line write: For the attention of the office of His Excellency, Ayatollah al Udhma Khamenei, Qom)**

President

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

**E-mail: [khatami@president.ir](mailto:khatami@president.ir)**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahruddi  
 Ministry of Justice, Park-e Shahr, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran  
**Faxes: + 98 21 879 6671 (unreliable; please mark "care of Director of International Affairs, Judiciary")**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**COPIES TO:**

Minister of Foreign Affairs,

His Excellency Kamal Kharrazi  
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Abdolmajid Keshk-e Mesri Av  
 Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

**Faxes: + 98 21 390 1999 (unreliable; please mark "care of the Human Rights Department, Foreign Ministry)**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**Influential Religious Leaders:**

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and to diplomatic representatives of Iran accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 19 December 2002.