

URGENT ACTION

HAMID GHASSEMI-SHALL RELEASED

Canadian-Iranian national Hamid Ghassemi-Shall, who had been sentenced to death in Iran in 2008, was released on 23 September after spending over five years in prison. He returned home to Toronto, Canada, on 10 October and was reunited with his wife.

Hamid Ghassemi-Shall, co-owner of a computer business in Canada, was retried on a charge of “gathering and colluding against the state” in August 2013 and sentenced to five years’ imprisonment. He was released after time served, on 23 September 2013. He was one of a number of political prisoners who were released shortly after Iran’s new President Hassan Rouhani took office earlier this year.

He had been arrested in May 2008, while visiting his elderly mother in Iran. His older brother Alborz Ghassemi-Shall, who lived in Iran, had been arrested about two weeks earlier. Both brothers spent 18 months in solitary confinement without legal representation in a military detention centre and Evin Prison, and were then transferred to section 350 of that prison, where many political prisoners are held.

Both men were sentenced to death on 29 December 2008, after an unfair trial by a Revolutionary Court. They were convicted of “enmity against God” (*moharebeh*) for espionage and cooperation with the proscribed People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI). During successive trial sessions, the brothers were denied regular access to a lawyer of their choice. Evidence used against the brothers during trial included a “confession” and an email the authorities alleged Hamid Ghassemi-Shall had sent to his brother Alborz Ghassemi-Shall, who had previously worked as a mechanical engineer in the Iranian army, which Hamid Ghassemi-Shall denied sending. The Supreme Court upheld the sentences on 7 November 2009. Alborz Ghassemi-Shall died in prison in January 2010, though the circumstances of his death are unclear. The Iranian authorities told the family that he had died from stomach cancer, but the coroner who examined his body reported a large head injury.

After learning that her husband could be executed at any time, in February 2011 Antonella Mega contacted Amnesty International Canada where a campaign spearheaded by her spread across Canada and later, the world.

Many thanks to all who sent appeals. No further action is requested from the UA network. Antonella Mega told Amnesty International: “They tried to silence me. But you spoke for me. Your voice gave me strength when all around me was desperation and hopelessness. The only way I can thank you now is to join your voices for those who are still being silenced.”

This is the first update of UA 113/12. Further information: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/023/2012/en>

Further information on UA: 113/12 Index: MDE 13/051/2013 Issue Date: 4 December 2013

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**

