

ANGER OVER CHRISTIAN CONVERT IN KABUL WHO FACES DEATH

The Times
March 21, 2006
From Tim Albone in Kabul

Note from Pastor Kevin Lea: I have included three articles about this very important news item. I have also included two e-mails that I sent to President Bush as a result of how this story is progressing. I believe the life or death of this courageous man will have a major impact on the future of the Middle East peace process and the "war on terror."

What a joy it is to see our brother take a stand for the truth of the gospel, even though he knows it will likely cost him his life.

President Bush has said that Muslims and Christians serve the same God. This crisis over the life of Abdul reveals how misinformed our president is. Christians serve God by willingly laying down their lives. Muslims serve their god by taking lives.

I often wonder why the Muslims don't admit how weak and murderous their god is. If Allah is so upset with Abdul becoming a Christian, why doesn't he kill Abdul himself? Why does he need his faithful followers to do so?

The Lord Jesus on the other hand is a powerful and loving God who allows the Christian to leave judgment up to Him. We rejoice that He allows the unbeliever to live, because we know that each day they live is another day where God is demonstrating His mercy and another day for us to tell the unbeliever about God's loving salvation through Jesus.

The Muslims must be afraid the unbelievers will be able to topple their god, thus we must be killed. We must keep praying for the Muslims that their eyes will be opened to the deception they are under.

ABDUL RAHMAN, a 41-year-old Afghan, was a Muslim for 25 years before he began working for an international Christian group helping his fellow countrymen in Pakistan. Within a couple of years he had converted to Christianity.

Fourteen years later, the decision may cost him his life.

After four years in Peshawar Mr Rahman spent the next nine in Germany. His problems

began when he returned to Afghanistan in 2002 and tried to recover his two daughters, now aged 13 and 14, who were living with his parents in Kabul.

His parents refused to return them. The matter went to the police, with the parents complaining that their son had become violent. Mr Rahman's father then denounced him as a convert. Mr Rahman was promptly arrested, and found to possess a Bible. He now languishes in Kabul central prison and will, if convicted of an "attack on Islam", face the death penalty under Afghanistan's new constitution.

Mr Rahman's case is shaping up as a trial of strength between Afghanistan's religious conservatives and reformers. "The constitution says Islam is the religion of Afghanistan, yet it also mentions the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Article 18 specifically forbids this kind of recourse," one human rights expert said in Kabul last night. "It really highlights the problem the judiciary faces."

News of his plight is likely to cause outrage in predominantly Christian countries such as Britain and America, whose troops are fighting to free Afghanistan from the religious zealotry of the Taleban.

The Bishop of Rochester, the Right Rev Michael Nazir-Ali, who leads the Church of England's dialogue with Islam, told *The Times*: "I'm amazed that the constitution that has been agreed in post-Taleban Afghanistan under the very eyes of the international community should allow this kind of thing to take place — for a person to be arrested for having been converted 14 years ago and to be threatened with execution simply for his beliefs.

"The British Army in Afghanistan is losing soldiers there through injury and death. Is the Army there to uphold this kind of thing? I thought we were there to promote democracy and freedom."

Alan Simpson, Labour MP for Nottingham South, told *The Times*: "We are asked to believe that in Afghanistan we are defending a more secular and democratic state when in fact the likes of Abdul Rahman face the death penalty. What sort of democracy are we defending? All reports suggest that the Taleban are coming in through the back door and their views through the front door. Hamid Karzai (the Afghan President) needs to be told that this absurdity must stop."

Nick Harvey, the Liberal Democrats' defence spokesman, said: "This is a horrifying situation and it makes a mockery of the efforts we are making to bring Afghanistan back into the international community. We have committed many soldiers to the situation in Afghanistan, many of whom will be committed Christians; we have spent huge amounts of money and committed resources and so I think we can take a strong moral position on this and explain to the Afghan authorities that to prosecute or even kill someone for having a different faith is unacceptable."

Mr Rahman is being prosecuted for an attack on Islam, the punishment for which, under

the draft constitution established in 2004, is death.

“The Attorney-General is emphasizing he should be hung,” Judge Alhaj Ansarullah Mawlawy Zada, who will be trying his case, told *The Times*. “It is a crime to convert to Christianity from Islam. He is teasing and insulting his family by converting. In your country (Britain) two women can marry; that is very strange.

Note from Pastor Kevin: this is a very good point. In fact Islam has gained strength as the west has abandoned the laws of God and embraced secular humanism, along with everything the Bible calls an abomination.

In this country we have the perfect constitution, it is Islamic law and it is illegal to be a Christian and it should be punished.”

The prosecutor, Abdul Wasi, has said that he would drop charges if Mr Rahman converted back to Islam, but he has so far refused to do so.

“He would be forgiven if he changed back, but he said he was a Christian and would always remain one . . . We are Muslims and becoming a Christian is against our laws. He must get the death penalty.” In the first hearing of Mr Rahman’s case, Judge Zada, the head of the Primary Court, said that a verdict would be reached within two months.

If the judge imposes the death penalty, Mr Rahman will still have two avenues of appeal under Afghan law — the Provincial Court and the Supreme Court. The death penalty has to be ratified by President Karzai.

Prison authorities refused repeated requests for Mr Rahman to be interviewed, but a cellmate, Sayad Miakhel, told *The Times*: “He is standing by his words; he will not become a Muslim again. He has been a Christian for over 14 years. It is what he believes in . . .” Mr Miakhel, 30, said that conditions in the prison were basic, with 50 men to a cell built for 15. “Most prisoners have food brought to them by their families, but none of Abdul’s family have been to visit. I’m not sure how he is eating.

“He seems depressed. He keeps looking up to the sky, to God,” said Mr Miakhel.

CHRISTIANS PERSECUTED

INDONESIA

Three schoolgirls killed in October last year. Their heads reportedly found in plastic bags with a note threatening murder of 100 more Christian teenagers

INDIA

Two pastors murdered in Hyderabad in May last year

NORTH KOREA

Kim Tae Jin was discovered with a Bible in his belongings in 1986 and sent to a forced

labour camp where he suffered violence and starvation

PAKISTAN

Any disparagement of the Prophet Muhammad is punishable by death

ERITREA

1,700 evangelical Christians imprisoned indefinitely for being part of what are deemed illegal churches

SOMALIA

Somali Christians seen as enemies of the State. Since end of the dictatorship in 1991 many have been attacked and killed

Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide

The above prompted Pastor Kevin to send the following e-mail to the White House

Subject - please save Abdul Rahman from the religion of peace

Dear Mr. President,

I have been to southern Sudan three times in recent years and have seen first hand the murderous effects of Sharia law.

How can you consider Afghanistan to be a partner in the war against terrorism when they are about to commit the same terror as the hijackers of 9/11, which is to slay the infidels wherever they find them?

Is it any less of a terror that one man is beheaded for leaving Islam, but another is blown up in the Trade Center because he lives in a country of Satan (meaning not Muslim (yet))? Dead is dead and terror is terror, whether it is done one head at a time or in batches of thousands.

As a Christian pastor, I beg you to use the power of your office to intervene and save the life of Abdul Rahman.

Thank you for doing what you can to save this man's life.

Kevin Lea

AFGHAN CLERICS CALL FOR ABDUL RAHMAN'S DEATH

http://counterterror.typepad.com/the_counterterrorism_blog/2006/03/the_apostasy_pr.html

In my [previous blog entry](#) about Abdul Rahman, the 41-year-old Afghan man who may face the death penalty for converting from Islam to Christianity, I noted that while a number of Islamic states outlaw apostasy, "the greater threat comes from vigilantes." I made a similar observation in a February 2004 [article](#) that I wrote for *Commentary*:

The greatest threat to apostates in the Muslim world derives not from the state, however, but from private individuals who take punishment into their own hands. In Bangladesh, for example, a native-born Muslim-turned-Christian evangelist was stabbed to death in the spring of 2003 while returning home from a film version of the Gospel of Luke. As another Bangladeshi apostate told the U.S. Newswire, "If a Muslim converts to Christianity, now he cannot live in this country. It is not safe. The fundamentalism is increasing more and more."

The Abdul Rahman situation bears this out. Even if the state doesn't put Abdul Rahman to death, Afghan clerics have announced that they will incite others to kill him. The Associated Press [reports today](#) (with emphases added):

"Rejecting Islam is insulting God. We will not allow God to be humiliated. This man must die," said cleric Abdul Raoulf, who is considered a moderate and was jailed three times for opposing the Taliban before the hard-line regime was ousted in 2001. . . . Diplomats have said the Afghan government is searching for a way to drop the case. On Wednesday, authorities said Rahman is suspected of being mentally ill and would undergo psychological examinations to see whether he is fit to stand trial. But three Sunni preachers and a Shiite one interviewed by The Associated Press in four of Kabul's most popular mosques said they do not believe Rahman is insane. "He is not crazy. He went in front of the media and confessed to being a Christian," said Hamidullah, chief cleric at Haji Yacob Mosque. ***"The government is scared of the international community. But the people will kill him if he is freed."*** Raoulf, who is a member of the country's main Islamic organization, the Afghan Ulama Council, concurred. "The government is playing games. The people will not be fooled."

"Cut off his head!" he exclaimed, sitting in a courtyard outside Herati Mosque. "We will call on the people to pull him into pieces so there's nothing left." He said the only way for Rahman to survive would be for him to go into exile. But Said Mirhossain Nasri, the top cleric at Hossainia Mosque, one of the largest Shiite places of worship in Kabul, said Rahman must not be allowed to leave the country. "If he is allowed to live in the West, then others will claim to be Christian so they can, too," he said. "We must set an example. . . . He must be hanged."

These clerics add their voices to a growing chorus of Afghan citizens calling for Abdul Rahman's death, including [his own father](#): "He is my son. But if a son does not care about the dignity of his family, the dignity of his father, God can take him away. You cannot make anything out of such a son. He is useless."

This case makes clear that the threat to converts out of Islam does not just come from the state, but from private citizens as well. And it makes clear that the belief that apostates deserve death is not an aberration, but is more widespread than many would like to acknowledge. The resolution of this case may well be a barometer of Afghanistan's future, and the future of democracy in the Middle East.

After reading the above, Pastor Kevin sent another e-mail (below) to the Whitehouse. The Christian should realize that our message is not that we want tolerance, but to point out the hypocrisy and foolishness of thinking democracy and freedom can be extended to a people who worship the hate god, Allah.

We know the message of the gospel of Jesus will not be "tolerated." Millions have been killed before us and millions are yet to lay down their lives as a result of persecution. The Lord Jesus said it would be so (Luke 6:22-27, Rev 6:10-11). However, we should also strive on behalf of and pray for our brothers and sisters in chains (Heb 13:3, Acts 12:6-12)

Subject: Abdul Rahman must live or else

Dear Mr. President,

I wrote yesterday, but am compelled to write again as a result of today's news.

I am a Christian pastor, former nuclear submarine sailor, a staunch conservative, voted twice for you, believe in all the reasons why we must win in Iraq, believe in the utter chaos that would ensue if we left and am otherwise a supporter of your/our war on terror.

With that said, if the Afghans kill Abdul Rahman for converting to Christianity then I (and millions like me) will expect you to pull ALL of our troops out of the area and let the Muslims kill each other till the cows come home.

If they kill Abdul, and you don't pull our troops out, then please understand that the reasons your ratings will be dropping to near ZERO is because of people like me who will have absolutely concluded that the Muslims in the area are not worthy of one more drop of American blood.

Sincerely and with respect of your great office and the great responsibilities and pressures you are under,

Kevin Lea

AFGHAN CHRISTIAN CONVERT

COULD BE EXECUTED

Western nations outraged Muslims who convert can be put to death



Wednesday, March 22, 2006 Posted: 1304 GMT
(2104 HKT)

Television footage shows Abdul Rahman being interviewed last week during a hearing in Kabul. YOUR E-MAIL ALERTS

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- In the days of the Taliban, those promoting Christianity in Afghanistan could be arrested and those converting from Islam could be tortured and publicly executed.

That was supposed to change after U.S.-led forces ousted the oppressive, fundamentalist regime, but the case of 41-year-old Abdul Rahman has many Western nations wondering if Afghanistan is regressing.

Rahman, a father of two, was arrested and is on trial for rejecting Islam. The Afghan constitution, which is based on Sharia, or Islamic law, says that apostates can receive the death penalty.

"They want to sentence me to death, and I accept it," Rahman told reporters last week, "but I am not a deserter and not an infidel."

He had been arrested after telling local police, whom he approached on an unrelated matter, that he had converted to Christianity. Reports say he was carrying a Bible at the time.

He said he converted to Christianity 16 years ago after working with a Christian aid group that assisted refugees in neighboring Pakistan.

Mentally unfit?

On Wednesday a state prosecutor said Rahman may be mentally unfit to stand trial, The Associated Press reports.

"We think he could be mad. He is not a normal person. He doesn't talk like a normal person," The AP quoted prosecutor Sarinwal Zamari as saying.

Moayuddin Baluch, a religious adviser to President Hamid Karzai, said Rahman would

undergo a psychological examination, according to the AP.

"Doctors must examine him," the AP quoted Baluch as saying. "If he is mentally unfit, definitely Islam has no claim to punish him. He must be forgiven. The case must be dropped."

When the examination or the trial would take place was not clear. The AP said authorities barred it from seeing Rahman and reported that he was believed to not have a lawyer.

A Western diplomat in Kabul and a human rights advocate said the government was desperately searching for a way to drop the case because of the reaction it has caused, the AP reports. The news agency said both spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.

Afghanistan's population is 80 percent Sunni Muslim and 19 percent Shiite Muslim, according to the CIA. The rest of the population is classified as "other."

U.S. objects to trial

Rahman's case raises thorny issues between Afghanistan and its Western allies, and U.S. officials this week made certain that Afghan Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah, who is in Washington for talks on the U.S.-Afghan strategic partnership, understood their qualms.

"We have underscored also to Foreign Minister Abdullah that we believe that tolerance and freedom of worship are important elements of any democracy," U.S. State Department spokesman Scott McCormack told reporters Tuesday. "We urge the Afghan government to conduct any legal proceedings in a transparent and fair manner."

Abdullah was supposed to talk to reporters Tuesday about talks for the strategic partnership. Instead, Abdullah was bombarded with questions about the Rahman case.

"I know that it is a very sensitive issue and we know the concerns of the American people," Abdullah said, adding that the Afghan Embassy in Washington had received "hundreds of messages" on the issue.

He further said that the Afghan government had nothing to do with the case.

"But I hope that through our constitutional process, there will be a satisfactory result," he said.

Constitution ambiguous

Rahman's case illustrates a split over the interpretation of the Afghan constitution, which calls for religious freedom while stating that Muslims who reject Islam can be executed.

Nicholas Burns, undersecretary for political affairs, said he understands the complexities

of the case and promised the United States would respect Afghan sovereignty. However, he said, Afghans should be free to choose their own religion, and he believes the nation's constitution supports that.

"We hope the Afghan constitution is going to be upheld," Burns said. "If he has the right of freedom of religion, that ought to be respected."

Rahman's case could force Afghan President Hamid Karzai into the undesirable position of mediating the matter. Karzai has to placate an ever-restless populace in turbulent post-war Afghanistan, but at the same time, he needs Western assistance to stave off the remnants of the Taliban and al Qaeda.

Allies indignant

The U.S. has 23,000 troops in the country; Germany has 2,700. Canada has 2,300 stationed there, and Italy has 1,775, according to Reuters.

All four nations have expressed displeasure over the situation, some even saying that it is intolerable that soldiers of all faiths die to protect a country threatening to kill its own for converting to Christianity.

Former Italian President Francesco Cossiga wrote a letter to Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, urging him to withdraw Italian troops from Afghanistan unless Kabul guarantees Rahman's safety, Reuters reported.

"It is not acceptable that our soldiers should put themselves at risk or even sacrifice their lives for a fundamentalist, illiberal regime," Cossiga wrote.

Rep. Tom Lantos, the ranking Democrat on the House International Relations Committee, wrote a letter to Karzai asking him to intervene and uphold "core democratic principles and fundamental human rights."

"In a country where soldiers from all faiths, including Christianity, are dying in defense of your government, I find it outrageous that Mr. Rahman is being prosecuted and facing the death penalty for converting to Christianity," Lantos wrote.

One German official promised to intervene if necessary. Another, Development Minister Heide Wiecek-Zeul, said, "We will do everything possible to save the life of Abdul Rahman," according to Reuters.

Canada echoed that sentiment, saying human rights in Afghanistan was a top priority and that "Canada will continue to encourage the Afghan government to adhere to its human rights obligations," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Pamela Greenwell told Reuters.

CNN's Elise Labott contributed to this report.

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