**Death Sentence for “Insulting the Prophet” on Facebook**

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International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran

http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2014/09/death-sentence-facebook/

A blogger found guilty of insulting the Prophet Mohammad in his postings on Facebook has been sentenced to death. An informed source told the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran that the blogger, Soheil Arabi, will be able to appeal the decision until September 20, 2014.

Agents from the Revolutionary Guards Corps’ (IRGC) Sarallah Base arrested Soheil Arabi, 30, and his wife in November 2013. Arabi’s wife was released a few hours later, but he was kept in solitary confinement for two months inside IRGC’s Ward 2-A at Evin Prison, before he was transferred to Evin’s General Ward 350. Branch 76 of the Tehran Criminal Court, under Judge Khorasani, found Arabi guilty of *“sabb al-nabi”* (insulting the Prophet), on August 30, 2014.

“The way he was arrested was illegal. It is not clear how the agents were able to enter their home at that time in the morning. All the doors were locked and family members were asleep. Agents entered his home and bedroom. He and his wife were arrested and some of their photographs and personal belongings were taken after their home was searched,” said the source.

“Soheil had eight Facebook pages under different names, and he was charged with insulting the Imams and the Prophet because of the contents of those pages. He has accepted his charges, but throughout the trial, he stated that he wrote the material without thinking and in poor psychological condition,” the source told the Campaign.

The source noted that the Tehran Penal Court issued its ruling without regard for Article 264 of the Islamic Penal Code. “Article 262 of the Islamic Penal Code states that if a person insults the Prophet of Islam, his punishment is death. But in Article 264, it explicitly says that if a suspect merely claims in court that he said the insulting words in anger, in quoting someone, or by mistake, his death sentence will be converted to 74 lashes. I would like to emphasize that if only the suspect claims this, he will not be eligible for death, and there is no need to even prove his claim,” added the source.

“Unfortunately, despite this Article and the explanations provided, the judges issued the death sentence. They didn’t even take any notice of Soheil’s statements in court in which he repeated several times that he wrote the posts under poor [psychological] conditions, and that he is remorseful. Three of the judges ruled for the death sentence, and two ruled for imprisonment,” said the source.

According to the source, Soheil Arabi has another judicial case. On September 4, 2014, Branch 15 of Tehran Revolutionary Court under Judge Salavati sentenced Arabi to the maximum punishment of three years in prison on charges of “insulting the Supreme Leader” and “propaganda against the state,” through his writings on Facebook.