

# *CAFAS Update No 38*

*6 December 2002*

*Council for Academic Freedom & Academic Standards*

*<http://www.cafas.org.uk>*

*Meeting:  
4.30pm*

*Saturday 25 January 2003, 2.00-*

*Room 2073  
Birkbeck College  
Malet Street  
London WCI*

*Underground: Goodge Street, Euston Square, Euston, Russell Square, Holborn*

## **ACADEMIC FACES EXECUTION IN IRAN**

Dr Hashem Aghajari lectures in history at the University of Hamedan, Iran. He is a prominent member of the reformist Islamic Revolution's Majhadeen Organisation.

In a speech last June he criticised Iran's ruling religious establishment (inter alia for its liking for luxury cars) and called for an Islam that gave equal rights to men and women, and to non-Muslims as well as Muslims. In the same speech he also criticised the ruling religious regime in Iran for violating the human rights of political activists and for using torture.

In August Dr Aghajari was arrested and on 6 November he was sentenced to death.

**Geoffrey Alderman**

Dr Aghajari's case requires urgent action. *CAFAS Update* readers are urged to circulate the above information and to write letters of protest to:

His Excellency the Ambassador,  
Embassy of Islamic Republic of Iran  
16 Prince's Gate  
London SW7 1PT  
Email: [info@iran-embassy.org.uk](mailto:info@iran-embassy.org.uk)

There is more information on the web under Dr Hashem Aghajari and at <http://shr.aaas.org/aaashran/alert>

*The letter below is an example of the protest you could make:*

Your Excellency,

Several members of my Council, university professors and lecturers, have asked me to write to you about

the case of Dr. Hashem Aghajari, a lecturer at the University of Hamedan, who has, they tell me, been sentenced to death.

I should be grateful if you would confirm that what I have been told is true.

If I have been correctly informed, may I humbly plead with you and your government to exercise leniency? I respect the difference between how the offence of which Dr Aghajari was accused is regarded in your country and how it would be regarded in Britain. But I am still horrified by the severity of the punishment. And I am fearful of the dreadfully damaging effect such an execution would have on Iran's reputation in the world. Though the United States and its allies are in no position to boast of their own record on human rights, I am sure that they will seize on this opportunity to tar the Islamic Republic and the Taliban with the same brush, and that the rampant islamophobia in the West will provide a willing audience.

Yours sincerely  
**Colwyn Williamson**  
3 December 2002

## MONA BAKER

Translation studies is a rather sheltered discipline which does not normally attract much attention, but Mona Baker, a professor at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, has recently found herself thrust into the limelight.

She has been denounced by a motley [group] of public figures ranging from the novelist Howard Jacobson to Estelle Morris, the former secretary of state for education, and the conjurer Uri Geller. The Jewish Telegraph carried a photograph of her beneath a banner headline about 'race-hate, and a review of one of her books on an Amazon website asks 'would you buy a book written by a racist?'

What did she do to merit this vilification? In April and May the eyes of the world were on the actions of the Israeli Defence Force in the West Bank. Academic unions in the UK responded with a call for their members to review links with Israel and a moratorium on European funding until the country began peace negotiations with the Palestinians. Professor Baker is involved in two specialist journals, *The Translator* and *Translation Studies Abstract*, both published by St Jerome Press. A month after Hilary and Steven Rose launched their petition for an academic boycott, Professor Baker, who had signed the petition, was moved by the Israeli army's attack on Jenin to support the boycott of Israel by severing links between her publications and two editorial advisers, Miriam Schlessinger of Bar-Ilan University and Professor Gideon Toury of Tel Aviv University. She explained that she did this not because they are Israelis, or because they are Jews, but because of their institutional affiliations. This did not, however, deter Daniel Rose, the NUS anti-racism campaign convenor, from describing the decision as "nothing short of racism".

On the face of it, there was not much that the critics could do about Baker's actions. Her journals are privately owned, and St Jerome Press is a small independent firm run by her and her partner. But Mona Baker is also professor of translation studies and

director of the centre for translation and intercultural studies at UMIST. Her enemies therefore turned their fire on the university. The vice-chancellor initially responded by dissociating the publications from the institute, saying that editorial policy was entirely a matter for those journals. But five days later he announced that there would be a wide-ranging ... internal inquiry.

It may be that UMIST was put under intense pressure by bodies such as the Association for Jewish Studies, based at Brandeis, which invited those who visited its website to add your voice to the chorus of protest by writing to the vice-chancellor, helpfully adding his email address.

The form and purpose of the promised inquiry remained obscure for several months, but in September the assistant registrar revealed that its remit would cover all issues arising from Professor Baker's decision to remove two Israeli academics from the Boards of her two independently owned journals. Manchester's student newspaper reported this announcement under the headline *Racism Enquiry*.

The inquiry is to be headed by Peter Norbury of the law firm Eversheds. Professor Baker has been told that she is a key witness, and that, in line with normal UMIST procedure, she may be accompanied by a trade union representative.

It is of course normal for someone accused of an offence to be accompanied in this way: why would a mere witness need assistance from her trade union? And where is the so-called normal procedure to be found in UMIST's regulations? We asked UMIST to tell us which of its regulations the inquiry is constituted under; they have refused to say. So far as we can tell, the whole procedure is wholly ultra vires. To make matters worse, senior officials at UMIST have pre-empted the outcome by publicly condemning Professor Baker's stand on Israel.

UMIST insists that the Norbury inquiry is not a disciplinary procedure. Its remit is to consider whether, in the light of [her] actions, other aspects of Professor Baker's role at UMIST

require examination (e.g. with respect to admissions, teaching practice), and if the management of the Centre for Translation Studies requires examination (e.g. receipt of inappropriate funding).

The brief, in short, is to go on a fishing expedition for administrative and financial irregularities, or-to put it more bluntly - to dig for dirt.

Mona Baker is clearly in danger of victimisation. It is not the business of the Council for Academic Freedom (CAFAS) to comment on the boycott of Israel or on how she chose to support it. It is our business to defend the freedom of academics 'to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward...controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions'.

This is why we defended Israelis like Mordechai Vanunu and Ilan Pappé, and this is why we are calling on UMIST to abandon what threatens to become a witch-hunt against Mona Baker.

**Michael Cohen & Colwyn Williamson**

*An edited version of this article was published in the Times Higher Education Supplement, 8 November 2002, under the headline "Umist should abandon boycott 'witch-hunt'"*

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## Mona Baker Petition

Cafas members are urged to sign the petition in support of Prof. Baker on <http://www.petitiononline.com/umist02>.

The international petition launched by Michael Cohen and Colwyn Williamson had over 500 signatures after a few days.

## Dr Saad Eddin Ibrahim

Dr Ibrahim, a 63 year old sociologist and human rights activist has just been released from prison. He awaits a second retrial. He was serving seven years hard labour for 'damaging Egypt's image' by accepting a grant from the European Union that was used to encourage people to vote in Egypt's legislative elections in 2000.

Dr Ibrahim's case was reported in the press, on the web and in the Chronicle of Higher Education: <http://chronicle.com>

Cafas members have registered their concern about Dr Ibrahim's case and members are urged to write to the London Ambassador:

His Excellency Dr A El-Gazzar  
Ambassador  
Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt  
26 South Street  
LONDON W1K 1DW

*(Compiled from information from Geoffrey Alderman, Michael Cohen and Colwyn Williamson.)*

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## ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL LIST 98

Following the Cafas meeting of 12 October 2002, Dr Harold Hillman wrote to his local MP, Sue Doughty, asking her if she would be prepared to put a question in parliament to clarify matters about List 98.

Majzoub Ali also wrote to his local MP, Sir Teddy Taylor, requesting him to raise the matter in the House of Commons. In particular he asked if there was a list of the counties that keep a List 98 and whether the information was computerised. Sir Teddy thought that Majzoub's request would be answered more comprehensively with a letter to the

Secretary of State asking for the information.

Schools Minister, David Miliband, replied that List 98 was introduced and maintained under local arrangements and was not a requirement under education and employment law. He also said that the Department for Education and Skills does not hold a record of the authorities that maintain such lists. He did not know if the lists were computerised. He went on, "Like any other employer, Essex LEA is free to decide on the criteria it wishes to apply for recruitment of employees, over and above that suggested in the enclosed guidance. Their List 98 and similar lists held by other educational establishments are introduced and maintained under local arrangements and are not a requirement under education or employment law."

He attached with his reply a copy of the DfES document entitled "Child Protection: Preventing Unsuitable People from Working with Children and Young Persons in the Education Service". The document applies to the DfES List 99. The Department has informed Mr Ali that his name was not included in List 99.

Mr Miliband confirms that local educational authorities have seemingly unlimited powers to decide on their own criteria for recruitment of teachers. They have a free hand to prevent those they identify as "undesirable" from employment. It would not be difficult to create criteria to enable these so-called "local arrangements" to exclude from employment teachers who are e.g. trade union or political activists, critics, ethnic minorities and anyone who opposes bullying from senior administrators. Mr Miliband appears to believe that lists introduced and maintained under "local arrangements" are democratic. This does not follow.

Lord Hanningfield, Leader of Essex County Council, in a letter to Cafas (26.6.02) wrote, "Unlike national Lists - List 99 and POCAL - the County Council's Lists do not bar an individual from employment in specific fields. They alert recruiters to concerns that may or may not be relevant in the context of a particular

job and enable them to take on board this information before making an appointment."

Under what democratic procedures were the Lists introduced? Lord Hanningfield said, "The Lists were created with the knowledge of Members." "Knowledge" is not the same as consent and his wording is sufficiently vague to imply that the number of Members could be anything from two to all.

For the benefit of new Cafas members, it was not until this year that Majzoub Ali discovered he has been on List 98 for a number of years. European Law had obliged Essex and other LEAs to inform individuals that their names were on such a list. It required strenuous efforts on the part of Majzoub and the NUT to extract from Essex an indication of what the criteria were.

Cafas spoke again to the NUT solicitor regarding Majzoub's case and a meeting has been arranged.

### Geraldine Thorpe & Pat Brady

Majzoub Ali can be contacted at: [majzoubali@hotmail.com](mailto:majzoubali@hotmail.com) or 36 Viking Court, Gunfleet, Shoeburyness, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS3 9PT

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## Comment

Academics all over the world are under attack. One view of the context for this is the decay of one social formation and the transition to another. Capitalism with the United States of America at its head is in decline. The process of decline began in Britain in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when *laissez-faire* had to give way to government intervention and bureaucracy. British capital was forced by the socialisation of labour, the increased organisation of workers and crisis (consequences of accumulation and class struggle) to go into Empire and to finance its rivals e.g. Germany and the USA. Government intervention became increasingly important. Wars and revolutions are aspects of decline and transition. There is constant pressure

to find new means to hold the system together as earlier ones, e.g. the Cold War and Keynesian policies, break down due to the contradictory movements of transition.

The dominant form of capital for most of the past century has been finance capital, with Britain giving way to the United States. Finance capital - a circulating parasitic form - expands markets and lies behind the privatisation of the public services and unrest in the world. Markets serve only the strong. They contribute to the widening gap between the richer and poorer countries.

In this context the tendency to extremes grows. Education becomes an increasingly sensitive ideological area. Those who challenge injustice and defend for example principles of human rights and academic freedom will be likely to find themselves in trouble.

The urgent cases of academics abroad like those of Dr Hashem Aghajari and Dr Saad Eddin Ibrahim, threatened with the death penalty and imprisonment for defending academic freedom and human rights, demand our full support.

Academics in Britain who oppose injustice are not immune from attack. Government seldom directly attacks them but the educational bureaucracy is willing to do the work for politicians as the Mona Baker case shows.

What is going on in schools is no different. Majzoub Ali has set an example through his persistence in fighting the injustice inflicted on him by Essex County Council. By writing letters and involving politicians and ministers, he has put his case in the public domain and forced the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to state their position on local authorities' powers.

The powers that David Miliband is condoning under "local arrangements" would be the envy of any totalitarian state.

**Pat Brady & Geraldine Thorpe**

## Sex and Philosophy

Readers of Update will know about "A Habit of Lies" and the associated web site but I would now like to introduce readers to my latest work. Writing "A Habit of Lies" gave me an interest in scientific philosophy and, like many people, I was struck by the analogies between scientific logic, that is Popperian method, and the process of evolution. This analogy led me to think one might be able to so develop evolutionary theory that Popper's logic could emerge from it. This would, so to speak, close the loop of scientific method and make scientific results, that is evolutionary theory, compatible with scientific logic and method.

I achieved that, to some extent, aim by interpreting rationality as an example of an ethic, a set of social rules to guide thinking. However, to find a place for rationality, I developed a hierarchical framework for evolutionary theory and it turned out that the other properties possessed by that theory were much more interesting than my original purposes.

Firstly, this hierarchy seemed able to interpret the very marked differences between animal sexuality and human sexuality. Secondly, "deviant" sexualities, such as homosexuality and sadomasochism, prove to be interpretable in the same framework.

Results such as this are very striking indeed and the reason for naming my new web site - "sex and philosophy." Also, I decided I was very serious about wanting to write this work up and resigned my job to have the time I needed.

During the writing, I got a nice academic bonus. It turns out that the phenomenon of humour could be interpreted in this same framework.

What is more, to my mind (admittedly biased) I find the interpretation of humour both elegant and plausible. I am also happy to report that there seems to be nothing remotely comparable in the scientific literature. I became even more determined to write this study up.

Given the abysmal standards of morality that have become commonplace in academia, I decided to keep quiet about this work and to refrain from publishing through normal channels; anonymous refereeing, to my mind, invites plagiarism. Instead, I have formed my own company, Holmhurst House Ltd., through which I will publish it. At the time of writing, the publication date is set at 31 December 2002 and I have called the book "The Architecture of Thought: A New Look at Human Evolution". It is at the printers and I hope to meet the publication date.

If people are interested, I have created a web site, <http://www.sexandphilosophy.co.uk> which will summarize some of the ideas. It will contain the full text of the chapters on sexuality (though from an earlier draft). However, the web site will not go into the theory of humour and will not be made accessible until 31.12.2002.

"The Architecture of Thought" will be available through the web site. I shall, of course, also be offering it to retail channels. Inspection copies will be offered to institutions and, for a short time, *gratis* copies will be available to workers in psychology, evolutionary theory, philosophy or other relevant field, who are willing to commit to writing a review. (Any reader who is interested should contact me at [john.hewitt1@virgin.net](mailto:john.hewitt1@virgin.net)).

**John Hewitt**

# NOTICES

## Agenda 25 January 2003

### Ordinary Meeting

1. Minutes
2. Matters arising
3. Tabled Items
4. Case reports
5. AOB

There will be an officers' meeting in Room 2073 at 1.30pm  
Informal lunch and chat from 12 noon in the Junior Common Room, 4<sup>th</sup> floor, extension wing (above the meeting room), Birkbeck College, Malet Street. All welcome.

### CAFAS ON THE WEB <http://www.cafas.org.uk>

### The Web Site

It looks as if we have now reached agreement with Bournemouth University about charges for hosting the CAFAS web site.

Accordingly, we will be able to stay with [www.cafas.org.uk](http://www.cafas.org.uk) as our domain name and it remains viable.

John Hewitt

### Active Risk Management in Education

Members of CAFAS may like to know that the first 'good practice procedures' produced by the HEFCE-funded project ARMED are now up on the web for comment. ARMED stands for Active Risk Management in Education. The project is run by five university in-house lawyers. There are procedures on student discipline, student debt, public interest disclosure and research

misconduct. Universities are encouraged to use these as models. Anyone may send in comments.

Access at  
[www.bristol.ac.uk/armed](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/armed) (leave space before 'armed').

Gill Evans

### Has your CAFAS subscription lapsed?

As always, we are dependent upon your financial support. Unfortunately, a number of members have fallen into arrears.

Your address label shows the date we last received any money from you. A red asterisk tells you that your subscription urgently requires renewal; two red asterisks indicate your subscription has seriously lapsed and needs your urgent attention.

If you have any queries, please get in touch! [Subscriptions are £10.00 per annum for waged, £5.00 for unwaged individuals:

### NEAR

Cafas has linked to the Network for Education and Academic Rights (NEAR).

Information is on the website  
<http://www.nearinternational.org/>

### Recent Publications

The magazine *Planet: the Welsh Internationalist*, 10 June 2002, contains an article by Mike Cohen and Colwyn Williamson mentioning Cafas. It is called "Does the University of Wales have a future?" and it is based on their Cafas pamphlet, "Why the University of Wales is under attack", February, 2002.

G.R. Evans, 2002, *Academics and the Real World*, SRHE & Open University Press

## Committee

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**Students' Complaints:**  
Please contact the Secretary.

**Update deadline:**  
**14 March 2003**

Please send letters on any issue, news items and articles to:

**CAFAS Update**  
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London E9 5SU  
e-mail: thorpe@lgu.ac.uk  
Tel/Fax: 0181 986 3004  
Disks & email are best. Disks will be returned.

**CAFAS Update seeks to provide an open forum for opinion and discussion. Items do not necessarily reflect the views of the Council.**

## CONSTITUTION

CAFAS' aims are outlined on the membership form. The full constitution can be obtained from the Secretary or [www.cafas.org.uk](http://www.cafas.org.uk). CAFAS was founded in March 1994. It depends on subscriptions and an active membership. It meets in January, April and October.

THE TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPLEMENT 22 NOVEMBER 2002

# Harvard makes U-turn and asks Paulin back

## Claire Sanders

Harvard University has reversed its decision to withdraw an invitation to poet and Oxford University academic Tom Paulin — despite the president of Harvard's public support for the cancellation. It is not yet known if Mr Paulin has accepted the re-invitation.

English department chair Lawrence Buell said in an email this week that a big factor in the decision was the "widespread concern and regret for the fact that the decision not to hold the event

could easily be seen, and indeed has been seen — both within Harvard and beyond — as an unjustified breach of the principle of free speech within the academy".

Mr Paulin, a lecturer at Hertford College, Oxford, was due to deliver the annual Morris Gray lecture last week. But it was cancelled after protests sparked by his statements about Israel. Mr Paulin is alleged to have told an Egyptian newspaper that US-born Israeli settlers should be shot dead. He has since said that his views had been distorted.

Last week Harvard president Lawrence Summers said that although the decision was up to the department, his view was that "the department has come to the appropriate decision". He has not commented this week.

Mr Summers has recently spoken out against anti-Semitism. In a statement at morning prayers last month, he called those demanding divestment from Israel "anti-Semitic in their effect if not their intent".

However, Professor Buell said in the email: "The decision not to

hold the lecture was not in any direct sense influenced by president Summers' prior remarks on anti-Semitism."

Rita Goldberg, a lecturer on literature familiar with Mr Paulin's work and remarks about Israel, had protested against the original invitation. She sent an email to students encouraging them to avoid the lecture and asking them to contact the English department to protest.

"Under rules instituted by the Rudenstein administration, students are entitled to an environ-

ment free of racism, hostility and threatening speech," she wrote. "An audience is oxygen to a poet, and the most effective way of showing your feelings is to deprive him of air."

It is understood that Harvard received a significant number of anti-Paulin protests. The decision to re-invite Mr Paulin was made by the English department's faculty, which voted after a two-hour debate. There were two abstentions, but the rest all voted to extend the invitation again.

**Soapbox, page 16**