



February 12, 2008

President Hamid Karzai  
Gul Khana Palace  
Presidential Palace  
Kabul, Afghanistan

Dear Mr. President:

**RE: Sayen Perwiz Kaambashk**

The British Columbia Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA), Canada's leading civil liberties organization ([bccla.org](http://bccla.org)), has taken note of press accounts of the death penalty recently proposed by an Afghan court for Mr. Sayen Perwiz Kaambashk, a student and journalist in your country.

As an organization devoted to the defense of democracy and freedom of expression, the BCCLA is deeply concerned to learn that an Afghan court has reportedly sentenced an Afghani citizen to execution as a form of punishment for exercising his fundamental human right of freedom of expression.

Mr. President, Canada is currently supporting a military mission in your country, a mission that Canada justifies in the name of promoting democracy and human rights in your country. This claim is profoundly undermined if Afghanistan is willing to execute its citizens for expressing or circulating unpopular opinions.

We write today to urge that you intervene immediately to secure release for Mr. Kaambashk, and take steps to assure world opinion that the Afghan state will not in the future use its power to execute its citizens for exercising the freedom of expression and opinion so central to a functioning democracy.

Yours sincerely,

Jason Gratl,  
President

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Michael Ignatieff

Art Lee

Alex MacDonald, Q.C.

Rafe Mair

Stephen Owen P.C., Q.C., M.P.

Svend Robinson

David Suzuki

Milton Wong



February 12, 2008

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Langevin Building  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A2

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Dear Mr. Harper:

**RE: Sayed Perwiz Kaambashk**

I write on behalf of the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association to urge that Canada take steps immediately to protest the recent court ruling in Afghanistan imposing a death penalty on a young journalist and student, Sayed Perwiz Kaambashk for circulating an article deemed insulting to Islam.

This outrageous abuse of state power to punish freedom of opinion cannot be condoned and must be condemned by all civilized observers.

Your government has recently called for an even longer Canadian military commitment in Afghanistan on the basis that Canada must continue to support Afghans in their move towards democracy and protection for human rights. Given the sacrifice Canadian soldiers and their families have made and will continue to make if we extend our mission for the cause of democracy and human rights in Afghanistan, it is imperative that the Canadian government use all means at its disposal to persuade Afghan authorities to respect these values and free Mr. Kaambashk. Furthermore, the Canadian government must urge Afghan authorities to respect freedom of expression for Afghan citizens, a freedom fundamental to democracy.

We look forward to a prompt response detailing the steps your government has taken to call for Mr. Kaambashk's release.

Yours sincerely,

Jason Gratl,  
President