

Convicted Afghan journalist stirs debate

by UPI

MAZAR-I-SHARIF, Afghanistan -- An Afghan journalism student sentenced to death said he wasn't allowed to have a lawyer nor speak in his own defense during his trial. Imprisoned for four months in Mazar-i-Sharif, Sayed Pervez Kambakhsh told The Independent that local judges decided his guilt before the four-minute trial began, Radio Free Europe reported Tuesday. Kambakhsh was sentenced to death for printing and distributing an Internet article that questioned interpretations about the role of women in Islam. Balkh Province Attorney General Qazi Hafizullah Khaliqyar denies Kambakhsh's claims that he didn't receive a fair trial, saying Afghan law was followed and the student declined representation, Radio Free Europe said. Abdullah Attaei, an Afghan expert in Shariah law, says the question of whether Kambakhsh wrote the article himself is vital. If Kambakhsh said he didn't write the article "then no court can judge his faith (according to Islamic law)," Attaei said. Under the Afghan Constitution, Kambakhsh said he is entitled to a lawyer and to speak on his own behalf. If allowed to speak to an appeals court, Kambakhsh said judges will see he did nothing wrong.

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