

DEATH FOR CHRISTIAN CONVERT?

Abdul Rahman, an Afghan man who converted to Christianity 16 years ago, is on trial in Afghanistan because he abandoned Islam. Under the Afghan constitution, which is based on Shariah law, any Muslim who rejects Islam must be sentenced to death. The trial, which began last week, may be interrupted given claims that Rahman is mentally ill and thus ineligible for punishment.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue was critical of the reaction coming from many American quarters:

“Hosnia Wafayosofi, an official at the jail where Abdul Rahman is imprisoned, boasts that ‘We will cut him into little pieces.’ Rahman, whose own father wants him killed, has no lawyer, no rights of any kind. The prosecutor, Abdul Wasi, calls Rahman a ‘microbe in society’ who ‘should be killed.’ The judge who is trying the case says, ‘If he doesn’t regret his conversion, the punishment will be enforced on him. And the punishment is death.’ And what has been the response of American elites?

“Unlike the Italian and German governments, which have waged a vocal protest against this act of barbarism, the administration of President George W. Bush has been quite mute. Yet in his second inaugural address, President Bush said, ‘We will encourage reform in other governments by making clear that success in our relations will require the decent treatment of their own people.’ Was Bush just blowing smoke? Bush also said, ‘All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know the United States will not ignore your oppression or excuse your oppressors.’ Then why not begin with Abdul Rahman?

“The *New York Times* has run one story on Rahman, consisting of three sentences. The *Washington Post* has run two stories, for

a total of nine sentences. The Council on American-Islamic Relations has said nothing.

“American troops did not die in Afghanistan so that the new government could kill Christian converts. There’s a lot hanging in the balance.”