

# Memorandum

To file



Subject	Date
Correspondence from Charlton Heston Concerning Criminal Conviction of Adil Shahryar	August 17, 1982

To The Attorney General

From John Roberts *JR*

In a letter to you dated August 9, Mr. Heston appealed to you to look into the federal prosecution of Adil Shahryar, who is the son of an Indian government official. The official is a friend of Mr. Heston's, and Adil himself has been a guest in the Heston home.

On August 30, 1981, Adil was arrested by state authorities in Miami for hotel arson. This arrest led federal authorities to another crime committed by Adil. Briefly, Adil contracted to ship video tapes from Florida to London. Adil obtained a shipping container, and a place for it on a vessel, but in lieu of videotapes filled the container with scrap paper and two explosive firebombs. The FBI, with a search warrant, discovered the phony shipment and bombs prior to their placement on board the ship. The only reason the container was still on the dock and not on board the ship was because the ship was late reaching port.

Adil was tried in federal court, before a jury, on five counts: (1) attempting to firebomb a ship; (2) false statements on various certificates in connection with the shipment; (3) mail fraud; (4) making of a firearm (the bombs); and (5) use of a firearm (the bombs) in the commission of a felony. The case was airtight: evidence linked Adil to the purchase of the bomb materials, and he had only an incredible story attempting to pin the blame on two associates to present in defense. He was convicted and sentenced, after a sentencing hearing, to 35 years. The judge indicated he viewed the attempted firebombing of the ship as very serious. Adil had what the prosecutor described as a "superb" defense attorney during the trial, though Adil fired him before the sentencing hearing. The original state arson charges are still pending against Adil. The assistant U.S. attorney who tried the case concluded that Adil was "dangerous and deserves every day of the 35 years he got."

The case is very sensitive and has high visibility in India. Indian officials have already been to see the assistant U.S. attorney. I have drafted the attached reply to Mr. Heston for your signature.

August 9, 1982

Dear Mr. Attorney General:

Justice is a complex matter, and perfect justice is perhaps beyond our reach. That admitted, I nevertheless bring to your attention a case of which you may already be aware, that I feel involves a miscarriage of the American tradition of fair and reasonable treatment before the law. I do so partly because I know the young man in question, but also because my experience in India this July convinced me that a grave mistake had been made which reflects unfavourably against the U.S.

The subject is an Indian citizen, Adil Shahryar, whose father I've known well since 1960, when he was Indian Ambassador to Spain. Adil himself has been a guest in our home, and we always thought of him as a fine boy. His father is Mohammed Yunus, a highly respected member of both of Mrs. Gandhi's governments, and a key figure there since before Independence, when he was a close friend of Mahatma Gandhi. He is currently chairman of the Trade Fair Authority of India. Adil's mother is a professor of Indian history at the University of Delhi. We knew the boy when he was a student here at Berkeley.

Lydia and I have just returned from Delhi, where we were guests in Mr. Yunus's home and were shocked to learn that Adil has been imprisoned in Florida under a consecutive sentence of thirty five years for a complicated set of charges involving attempted but unconsummated arson and fraud. Mr. Yunus believes his son is totally innocent, as does Adil's American lawyer. Of course I can't make any judgment on his guilt or innocence. I do feel that the matter deserves some further attention, and that the sentence is, to say the least, remarkably harsh. That Adil was jailed for several months without arraignment, then held on bail of \$1,250,000.00, and that his two confederates have gone scot-free, is mystifying. Mr. Yunus has sent me a summary of the matter which I will enclose with this letter.

I cannot judge the parameters of the case, but I do know that Adil had two brain operations here in California, after a motorcycle accident. Once, a guest in our home, Adil came with his head still in bandages. Though his prognosis at that time was not good, he apparently recovered. Nevertheless, Adil's American lawyer, Richard Hammer (who no longer represents him), insists that Adil was found guilty because he personally antagonized the judge (Federal Court Judge J.W. Kehoe) with his arrogant and overbearing manner. Hammer even found it necessary to have psychiatric appraisals done. Adil was found sane, but it's easy for me to believe that he may have undergone some drastic mental changes since I last saw him.

I know you may have received other appeals on this matter, but I feel I must express my understanding of the case, as well as my deep concern, and to urge that if any other solution can be found, such as deportation, this might be considered.

Lydia and I happened to be in Delhi on the day Hinckley was declared innocent. An Indian official remarked to us that we Americans had a strange country, where a man could shoot the President and get off scot-free, while another could launch a failed fraud and get thirty-five years. I had no answer for him.

I'm sorry to add this to your problems. Still, I'm heartened by the insight and calm moderation you've brought to the heavy responsibilities you've undertaken. Perhaps you can ask one of your staff to bring these qualities to bear on this case.

Lydia and I both applaud you. Our best to Jean as well; we hope to see you soon.

As ever,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Chuck". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the text "As ever,".

Adil Shahryar was arrested at Miami on 30th August, on a charge that he had attempted to set fire to the Sheraton Beach Hotel there. In reality, it was he who informed the management about the fire and it was on the basis of this information that a tragedy was averted. The management was naturally appreciative of his timely warning and shifted him to another room.

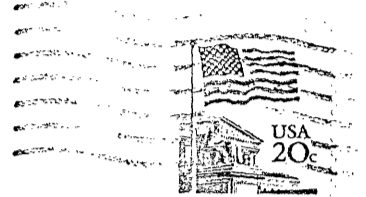
A day earlier to his arrest, Adil had a tiff with two men - Bill Hill and Dick Lawson, who were entrusted with the task of procuring and shipping a consignment of Programmed Video Cassettes to London. But since the goods were not ready for shipment and the validity of the Letter of Credit was about to expire, they informed Adil about a plan to cover up the delay and save cancellation of the Letter of Credit. Adil didn't agree, as he was anxious to get the stuff delivered in London and receive his normal commission. This greatly incensed the two, as they felt that according to their plan the shippers won't accept a damaged container and thus the validity of the Letter of Credit would be automatically extended. This arson case is still pending with the State of Florida.

While in detention, Federal charges were levelled against Adil that (a) he had filled the container with scrap paper instead of video cassettes and (b) placed an explosive in it with the intent of endangering a ship. This detection took place when he was in jail. He was also asked to furnish a bail of \$ 1.25 million.

The facts of the case are that Adil had a genuine Transferable Letter of Credit for the supply of video cassettes. The consignment was neither insured nor booked in a ship. So the question of defrauding anyone or endangering a ship doesn't arise. The two absconding persons, who got Adil arrested in the first place on an arson charge, later implicated him in other cases, and are still at large. Their arrest warrants were issued in April '82.

The Federal cases were taken up after several months. This was contrary to the Speedy Trial Act, which provides trial to begin within seventy days from the date of information/arrest. Being under detention and with such a huge amount of bail to be furnished, Adil was unable to defend his interests during the initial months. He was subsequently convicted by Federal Judge James Kehoe on May 17, 1982 in five cases to consecutive terms totalling 35 years.

2859 COLDWATER CANYON DRIVE  
BEVERLY HILLS, CALIFORNIA 90210



Mr. William French Smith  
The Attorney General  
Washington, DC

Reproduced from the holdings of the:  
National Archives & Records Administration  
Record Group: 60 Department of Justice  
Accession # 60-89-372  
Box 30 of 190  
Folder: John G. Roberts, Jr. Misc.