

Prisoners of faith

release
PRISONERS

EMAIL ALERT

FEBRUARY 2012

Farhad, Davood & Naser Iran



Pastor Farhad Sabokruth, Davood Ali-Jani and
Naser Zamen-Dezfuli Photo: Mohabat News

The spectre of arbitrary arrest and imprisonment continues to hover over Iran. During the Christmas period, authorities intimidated, arrested, interrogated and detained a number of Christians.

FCNN (Farsi Christian News Network) has reported that on Christmas Eve a large number of Iranian state security agents, dressed in civilian clothes and wearing hoods, stormed the Assemblies of God church in Ahwaz at 11am. They shouted obscenities at those present, including women and children, before throwing them into waiting vans and driving away at high speed.

No legal documents authorising the raid or the search of the church were produced. The church members were then driven to an unidentified school where they were separated into various groups and taken to different classrooms that had been turned into temporary interrogation centres.

Most of those detained were released a few hours after their arrest with strict instructions not to continue meeting together with other Christians, to refrain from evangelising and not to inform the international media about what had taken place. Mobile phones, laptops and other personal possessions were confiscated and the group were instructed not to leave the city. They are now living under the threat of re-arrest.

Now, a month after the mass arrest, the whereabouts of three of those detained is still unknown. There is no reliable news concerning either the condition or exact location of Pastor Farhad Sabokruth nor his two co-workers Davood Ali-Jani and Naser Zamen-Dezfuli. Unconfirmed reports have suggested that all three are being held in Karoon prison in Ahwaz (Sepidar region). Their families have not been permitted to see them.

Family and friends have expressed concern about the treatment of Farhad, Davood and Naser. The Iranian authorities are being deliberately evasive and to date are denying any knowledge of the events described above. This adds significantly to the pressure on the families of those detained and is designed to create a feeling of fear, insecurity and helplessness in the whole of the Christian community. Please continue to remember our brothers and sisters in Iran at this time, particularly those who meet together in house churches. Being an evangelical Christian and a leader is likely to lead to surveillance from the authorities and the very real possibility of being arrested and imprisoned.

HELPING CHRISTIANS IMPRISONED FOR THEIR FAITH

'I am in chains for Christ' Philippians 1:13

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PLEASE PRAY

- ▶ That the families of Farhad, Davood and Naser will be able to visit their loved ones in prison.
- ▶ That God will comfort, strengthen and protect Farhad, Davood and Naser.
- ▶ For their release, and for courage for new house church leaders.

PLEASE WRITE

When writing please do not mention Release International, advance your political opinions or include anything which could be insulting to the authorities.

At the moment we are in touch with our partners who are monitoring the situation with regard to the detention of Farhad, Davood and Naser. If we are advised that the families would like help from the international community by writing and campaigning on behalf of their loved ones then we will of course keep you informed.

Please do not write to the authorities at this stage but send a card of encouragement to the families assuring them of your concern and your prayers.

Send a simple card of encouragement c/o Release International, PO Box 54, Orpington, BR5 9RT, UK.

Release International produces the Prisoners of Faith alert every month as part of its ministry to support persecuted Christians. To receive your own copy free of charge by email, please register your details at www.releaseinternational.org/signup.

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