

Prisoners of faith

release
PRISONERS

EMAIL ALERT

MAY 2010

Pastor Bahnam Irani Iran



Pastor Bahnam Irani

Photo: FCNN

Intimidation, interrogation, arrest and actual imprisonment of house church and other Christians in Iran have escalated dramatically during the past 12 months. One of the most recent incidents took place on April 14, when Bahnam Irani, a house church pastor, was arrested following a raid on his home in Karaj where approximately 10 young men recently converted to Christianity had gathered for fellowship and Bible study.

Several plain-clothes officers, who introduced themselves as agents from the Ministry of Information, arrested all in attendance and forced them to fill out forms to explain how they became Christians and who baptized them. The young men were told they had attended an illegal meeting and that in the coming days they would be summoned for further questioning by authorities.

Although Iran's Ministry of Information is ostensibly in charge of Iran's telecommunications industry, it is actually an arm of the Ministry of Intelligence and Security of the Islamic Republic of Iran (MISIRI), whose predominant role appears to be to intimidate Iranian citizens while depriving them of fundamental human rights in an effort to protect the Islamic ruling classes.

During the operation Pastor Irani was assaulted before being taken to an undisclosed location. Later that day, officers again entered Pastor Irani's home and confiscated most of his personal belongings, including pictures, cameras, computers, Bibles, and other Christian literature. This is not the first time Pastor Irani has been incarcerated. In December 2006, he was arrested together with a number of other house church leaders and as a result spent more than one month in prison.

Friends and family of Pastor Irani are anxious to know what he has been charged with and where he is being held. They are also concerned about how he is being treated and have asked for prayer for his safe release. It is believed that he is being held at a detention centre in the the Gohar-Dasht area in Karaj city, although Iranian officials have refused to give the family any precise information about his arrest or to confirm exactly where he is at present.

The brutal nature of the arrest of another Christian leader and the intimidation of the bible study group has become something of a familiar pattern recently and confirms that the Iranian authorities both recognise and are determined to halt the spread of Christianity in Iran.

HELPING CHRISTIANS IMPRISONED FOR THEIR FAITH

'I am in chains for Christ'

Philippians 1:13

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PLEASE PRAY

- ▶ That God will protect Pastor Irani at this time of uncertainty
- ▶ That church leaders will be given wisdom and that Christians will remain faithful
- ▶ That Pastor Irani's family will be strengthened and that he will be released

PLEASE WRITE

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

Send a card of encouragement to the family of Pastor Irani
c/o Release International, PO Box 54, Orpington, BR5 9RT, UK.

You may also send a letter to the Iranian Ambassador, expressing your concern at the growing number of arrests and the increased harassment and discrimination faced by Christians in Iran.

His Excellency Mr Rasoul Movahedian
Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran
16 Prince's Gate
London SW7 1PT

Your Excellency,

I would like to express my concern about the recent increase in surveillance, harassment and detention of Christians in Iran. Numerous reports suggest that the Iranian authorities appear determined to coerce, frighten and intimidate their own citizens and to deny them the protection of the state or the freedom to practise their faith.

In recent months there have been several arrests of Christians who appear to be law-abiding citizens and yet have been targeted in this way simply because of their Christian beliefs. The Iranian Constitution supports the rights of religious minorities in Iran and many in the international community are concerned that the actions of the Iranian authorities are both unconstitutional and unjust.

I respectfully petition your Government to demonstrate both excellence in leadership and equity in its administration.

Yours sincerely,

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.

If you would like to make a financial donation to support Christian Prisoners of Faith and their families, you may give securely online at www.releaseinternational.org/donate, or by calling 01689 823491. Registered Charity 280577.

HELPING CHRISTIANS IMPRISONED FOR THEIR FAITH

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