

Prisoners of faith

release
PRISONERS

EMAIL ALERT AUGUST 2011

Pastor Yousef Nadarkhani Iran



Photo : Present Truth Ministries

Iranian pastor Yousef Nadarkhani, aged 34, was arrested in October 2009 after he protested against a government policy that required children, including his two sons, Daniel (9) and Yoel (7), to study the Koran in school.

Pastor Nadarkhani insisted that the Iranian constitution allows for freedom of religious practice. As a result, secret police summoned him before a political tribunal and arrested him for protesting. The charges were later amended to apostasy and evangelism of Muslims.

Pastor Nadarkhani was tried in September 2010 and found guilty of apostasy (leaving Islam) and sentenced to death. Three weeks later on November 13, written confirmation of the sentence was delivered by the 1st Court of the Revolutionary Tribunal. Since then Pastor Nadarkhani has been held in Lakan prison, where authorities have used various methods to 'encourage' him to recant his faith and return to Islam.

In an attempt to place even more pressure on Pastor Nadarkhani, the authorities also arrested and imprisoned his wife, Fatemeh. She was in prison for four months before being released following a successful appeal by her lawyer. The Nadarkhanis' children were cared for by a relative while they were both in prison.

According to reports from various sources including Iranian Christian news agencies, Voice of the Martyrs USA, Christian Solidarity Worldwide and others an appeal filed on behalf of Pastor Nardarkhani was rejected on July 27, and a written verdict from the Supreme Court confirmed the death sentence.

The Supreme Court did, however, point out procedural flaws and has asked the lower court to re-examine the case. The judges would like clarification as to whether Pastor Nadarkhani was truly a Muslim prior to becoming a Christian. If it is determined that he has been a 'true' Muslim and he does not now recant his Christian faith, the death sentence will stand.

Pastor Nadarkhani's lawyer, the prominent human rights defender Mohammad Ali Dadkhah, is also now facing legal difficulties. On Sunday, July 3, a court in Tehran sentenced Mr Dadkhah to nine years in jail and imposed a 10-year ban on practising law or teaching at university for 'actions and propaganda against the Islamic regime'.

HELPING CHRISTIANS IMPRISONED FOR THEIR FAITH

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

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PLEASE PRAY

- ▶ That God will equip pastor Nadarkhani to remain strong.
- ▶ That the Iranian authorities will overturn their decision, drop the charges and release him.
- ▶ For God to challenge Christians around the world to intercede on his behalf.

PLEASE WRITE

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

Informed partners have asked Release International to encourage our supporters to send cards of encouragement to Pastor Nadarkhani. Present Truth Ministries says that until Nadarkhani's case is reconsidered by the lower court, 'it is critical that we continue in prayer for him'. It goes on to say, 'We are receiving reports that he is standing firm and strong in his faith, even encouraging those who are discouraged, exhorting them to trust in the Lord.'

Prison address

Yousef Nadarkhani
Lakan Prison
Rasht
Gilan Province
Islamic Republic of Iran

Cards may also be sent to: **Yousef Nadarkhani, c/o Release International, PO Box 54, Orpington, BR5 9RT**

Please note that cards and letters may not always get through to our brothers and sisters, but as they include scripture and encouraging words, they may plant a seed of faith in the hearts of the guards or officials who read them. Also it tells the Iranian authorities that this brother or sister is not forgotten, and that thousands of people are praying for them and are concerned about their welfare.

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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