

Prisoners of faith

release
PRISONERS

EMAIL ALERT DECEMBER 2010

Said Musa Afghanistan



Said Musa, an Afghan citizen and 15-year employee of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Kabul, Afghanistan, was arrested on May 31, 2010, for being a convert to Christianity from Islam. Since that time he has been illegally imprisoned, tortured, abused and threatened with death, because of his Christian faith.

Musa was arrested after video footage showing Afghan Christians being baptised and participating in prayer gatherings was televised nationally. The broadcast triggered protests throughout the country and calls to execute Christians – including from a deputy leader in parliament.

A father of six and an amputee with a prosthetic leg, Musa explained in a letter written from Oullayat prison in Kabul that he had been beaten, forcibly deprived of sleep, and sexually abused by prisoners. He added that Afghan judicial officers granted him no protection and at times encouraged the abuse.

In his letter to the international community which is both heartbreaking and challenging, Musa pleads for international intervention while at the same time revealing his deep love for and commitment to Christ

Afghanistan is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 18 states: 'Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.'

The Afghan Constitution Article 7 states: 'The state shall abide by the UN Charter, international treaties, international conventions that Afghanistan has signed and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights'. In spite of this constitutional framework and the Afghan Government's declared commitment to democracy, for two months Said Musa's family could not find out from the authorities where he was being held. Nor has there been any Afghan lawyer willing to represent him and the family has been denied access to his file which includes the charges against him.

His trial, which was to have taken place on Sunday, November 21, has again been postponed, a decision that hopefully will allow a little more time for Musa to get legal representation.

Recent reports confirm that Musa's cousin has been allowed to visit him in prison and also speak about how Musa is encouraged that people all over the world are praying for and supporting him. One of his friends commented: '[Musa] is a great encouragement for us because he shows so much love and commitment to his Saviour.'

HELPING CHRISTIANS IMPRISONED FOR THEIR FAITH

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

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PLEASE PRAY

- ▶ To the Lord for Musa's release
- ▶ That God will strengthen both Musa and his family during this difficult time
- ▶ That God will touch the hearts of Afghan officials overseeing his case

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.

Sample letter which may be emailed to President Karzai at the following address hussain.rahimi@gmail.com or faxed to 020 7581 3452

To His Excellency President Hamid Karzai,

Your Excellency,

Thank you for your commitment to justice and to human rights. I believe that you have been instrumental in leading Afghanistan forward on the path to democracy. Excellency, I am concerned about the case of Mr Said Musa who was arrested in May this year and is imprisoned in Oullayat prison. It appears that Mr Musa has been denied his fundamental rights as a citizen of Afghanistan. He has been imprisoned with no formal charge, tortured while in prison, and denied legal representation. The only apparent 'crime' which he has committed is being a Christian.

Mr Musa was scheduled to be tried on November 21, 2010. Thankfully, the trial was postponed giving time for legal representation to be found. I urge your government and the Minister for Justice to ensure that Mr Musa is given competent legal representation before the trial takes place. But I would also ask your Excellency to investigate the case personally and consider if your government wishes to prosecute a man for nothing more than his religious belief, in violation of international law, the Constitution of Afghanistan, and every principle of justice.

Your Excellency, aside from any considerations of international law and human rights, the treatment of Mr Said Musa is in violation of many of the fundamental freedoms outlined in the Constitution of Afghanistan. I urge you to act not merely on behalf of Said Musa but also on behalf of every citizen of Afghanistan who looks to your government for justice. If Mr Musa is found guilty, and your nation makes religious belief into a crime, it will not only tarnish your nation's commitment to justice but it will imperil the very foundations of your new-found democracy.

Thank you for your help and for your kindness in ensuring that Mr Musa's case is dealt with justly and that he is ultimately released and reunited with his family.

Yours sincerely

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HELPING CHRISTIANS IMPRISONED FOR THEIR FAITH

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