

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

for the Persecuted Church

Persecuted: Not Abandoned



Islamic Republic of Iran

Iran

Iran has held its own cultural independence, language, and Shia interpretation of Islam since ancient times. After a brief period of political engagement with the West that ended in 1979 with the fall of the Pahlavi monarchy, Iran embraced a theocratic Shiite government. Movements for greater public freedom have often been attacked by those pushing for the strict observance of Shia law. In 2005, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was elected President and his regime maintains strict control of the Iranian people. However, recent years have seen a growing appetite for political reform among the Iranian people. There is also a growing openness to considering the claims of Christianity, especially among the young.

Christians make up less than one-half of one percent of the population. The open witness of the Good News is banned and government spies monitor Christian groups. Believers are discriminated against in education, employment, and property ownership and also face arrests, imprisonment, and sometimes even death.

Although missionaries are not allowed to work in Iran, a growing number of Muslims have converted to Christianity. Many Christians have fled Iran and have sought refugee status abroad. Those who commit the crime of apostasy (leaving Islam

for another religion) are often arrested and tried in court. These charges are of particular concern since a draft law proposed in early 2008 that would mandate the death penalty for apostasy has passed several stages of Iran's legislative process.

PRAYER POINTS:

Pray that the government will be open to change and allow full rights and protection for non-Muslims.

Pray for strength for those who come to Christ despite the threats they may face.

Pray that those who flee Iran will be able to find refuge and help.

Pray for two Christian women (Maryam and Marzieh) who have been detained in Tehran's notorious Evin prison since March. They are charged with "propagating Christianity" and their case will be held in a general court. They are both in poor health, suffering severe food poisoning. The women are not prepared to lie about their faith under any condition. Pray that these formal charges against them would be dropped so they can be freed. Ask God to guard their minds and strengthen their bodies during this ordeal.

FACTS

GEOGRAPHY

Area: 1,648,000 sq. km. Situated in the Caspian Sea in north and Arabian Sea/Persian Gulf in south. A central desert ringed by mountains.

Population: 65,875,223

Over 70 ethnic groups, some being small nomadic groups. Including Turkic, Semitic, Christian minorities and refugees.

GOVERNMENT

Iran is a theocratic republic. Tehran is the capital city.

The Voice of the Martyrs recently learned of the arrest of Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani in Guilan, Iran on October 12 2009 after he protested against the decision of local authorities to impose the reading of the Koran on Christian children. This requirement, Pastor Nadarkhani insisted, violates the Declaration of Universal Human Rights (which Iran has signed) that states: "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children" (Article 26). At last report, Pastor Nadarkhani remained in detention.

Pray for Pastor Nadarkhani's release. Pray that he will have continued courage to stand up for his convictions.