

Iranian Christians imprisoned without charge

Country/Region: Iran, Middle East and North Africa

The families of four Iranian Christians imprisoned without charge have gone public about their loved ones' plight in an international plea for prayers for their release.



Pastor Vahik Abrahamian and his wife
Sonia Keshish-Avanesian

Pastor Vahik Abrahamian and his wife Sonia Keshish-Avanesian, and Arash Kermandjani and his wife Arezo Teymouri, have been locked up for nearly three months after they were arrested together on 4 September. Sonia was pregnant at the time but is reported to have lost her baby while in prison, having previously suffered three miscarriages. The two couples, who are close friends, were at the Abrahamians' home in Hamadan when they were detained by agents of the Ministry of Islamic Guidance.

On the same day, several other Christians in various parts of the city were also arrested. Two spent a month in prison before being released; the condition and whereabouts of two other detainees is not known.

The families of the imprisoned Christians were threatened with dire consequences if they publicised the matter - a warning they initially heeded. But after nearly three months of no action they spoke out, appealing for Christians across the world to pray for their release.

"Ludicrous" accusations

The detained Christians have been accused of a variety of offences including being connected with exiled opposition sources, propagating Christianity in Iran, opposing the Islamic Republic and the formation of opposition groups in and out of the country. Their family and friends say these allegations are absurd and ludicrous.

Pastor Vahik and his wife Sonia, who are in their 40s, spend much of their time helping the needy and disadvantaged. He spent 53 days in prison earlier this year after being arrested on false pretences in February. Arash and Arezo, who are in their early 30s, are new Christian converts.

It is reported that the quartet were held in isolation suffering intense physical abuse and psychological pressure at the Ministry of Islamic Guidance prison for 40 days before being moved to Hamadan prison.

The totalitarian Islamic regime in Iran is a severe persecutor of Christians, especially converts; President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has reportedly pledged to "stop Christianity in this country".

Please Pray:

- That the two couples, and other Christians being falsely held in Iranian prisons, will be promptly released.
- That the Lord will sustain and strengthen them throughout their ordeal. Pray especially that Sonia and Vahik will be comforted following the loss of their unborn baby.
- That the Lord will soften the hearts of the Iranian authorities towards Christians in the country and that they will relent in their brutal persecution of our brothers and sisters.



Arash Kermandjani



Arezo Teymouri