

Pastor Urges UN to Prevent Christian Apostasy Genocide™

Reza Safa, founder of the evangelistic TBN Nejat TV, said Iran wants to make conversion punishable by death because it fears the spread of Christianity.



[] A charismatic pastor is urging the United Nations and U.S. lawmakers to prevent the Iranian government from passing an apostasy law that he says would lead to genocide of Christians.

Reza Safa, pastor of Fishermen's House Church in Tulsa, Okla., sent a letter of complaint to the United Nations on Dec. 8, listing nearly 90 incidents of Christian persecution in Iran, including arrests, torture and harassment. An Iranian native himself who converted to Christianity from Islam, Safa asked the international body to pressure Iran to abide by provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which both guarantee religious freedom.

Safa, whose Farsi-language TBN Nejat TV broadcasts the gospel into Iran via satellite, also is urging U.S. lawmakers to pass resolutions in the House and Senate that would formally denounce Iran's attempts to make conversion from Islam punishable by death. The apostasy law passed in the Iranian Parliament in September and is currently awaiting consideration by the Guardian Council, a judicial body similar to the U.S. Supreme Court.

"The danger is, if this law passes through the Guardian Council, which acts like our Supreme Court, then it goes to the last level, which is the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei," Safa said. "If he OKs it ... then they start executing people. They have lists of thousands of people that

they know their whereabouts, their home addresses. It can be a genocide. I think one of the things they want to do is create fear in the hearts to stop this phenomenal conversion [to Christianity].”

Safa estimates that there are more than 2 million Christians in Iran, despite official reports that claim there are only several hundred thousand. He said because of the fast growth of Christianity in Iran, converts are frequently intimidated and harassed. One convert was attacked by four men, who beat him until they broke his legs and pulled out all of his fingernails with pliers, Safa said.

Another Christian was taken to prison and told that if he didn't convert back to Islam, his daughter would be taken from him. A woman was jailed for giving a Bible to a co-worker. Authorities ransacked the home of a Christian couple, taking the husband and saying they were going to kill him. They returned the man a week later, in what Safa said was an attempt to intimidate the converts.

Christians who attended conferences have had their passports revoked. Others who attended a Bible school Nejat TV operates have been arrested.

“This is just from our group,” said Safa, whose ministry has helped many Christians find asylum in other nations. “We're talking about tens of thousands more.”

Yet despite the persecution, Safa says the Iranian church continues to grow. Within the last two years, his ministry has seen 80 underground house churches form. And though the government has blocked his ministry's Web site, Safa says it still continues to get 45,000 hits each day.

Safa said many Web visitors tell of their salvation and deliverance from drug addiction. Military leaders also have come to Christ but keep their conversions secret, and prominent imams have experienced divine healing while watching Safa's program.

Safa, who launched his campaign against Iran's apostasy law with help from the American Center for Law and Justice, is calling on U.S. Christians to urge their elected officials to pressure the Iran government to guarantee religious freedom.

"For the past 1500 years, the Islamic nations, through the Islamic Sharia law, have been successfully cleansing the Christian and Jewish communities of their nations to the point of almost extinction," Safa wrote in a letter to ministry supporters. "Turkey is a great example. Once a stomping ground for Christendom, today Turkey is percent Muslim.

"That same trend has been taking place in Iran in our own lifetime," he added. "The time is short and we must act now to protect the lives of the body of Christ in Iran." **-Adrienne S. Gaines**