

Couple, Fellow Church Members Sentenced to Prison for Practicing Christianity

Iran's Islamic regime has sentenced an Iranian couple to prison for practicing Christianity and also sentenced every member of their church to one year in prison.

Article 18, an organization that supports Iranian Christians, tweeted on Thursday that "A Christian couple have reported that a court in Boushehr has just sentenced them and 10 other Iranian Christians to one year in prison each for 'Propagating against the Islamic Republic in favor of Christianity.' This group of Christian converts was arrested on April 7, 2015."

The Christian website Mohabat News reported last week that the Iranian couple was charged with "orientation toward the land of Christianity."

Jeff King, the president of International Christian Concern, confirmed to *The Jerusalem Post* on Friday that each member of the congregation was also sentenced to a year in prison.

"Getting information on the arrests of Christians is incredibly challenging given the heavily censored nature of Iran," King said. "But based on the cases we have been tracking, this is the first time this year that we've seen a jail sentence being given based on the charge of 'inclination to the land of Christianity.' This could be interpreted as a reference to Israel, the birthplace of Christianity and also a country that Iran has adopted a very aggressive stance towards."

Christianity is a legally recognized religion in the Islamic Republic of Iran. According to the Iran 2017 International Religious Freedom Report prepared by the U.S. State

Department, the Iranian constitution allows Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians (excluding converts from Islam) as the only recognized religious minorities permitted to worship and form religious societies “within the limits of the law.”

The Islamic Republic is listed as number 10 on Open Doors USA’s list of the Top 50 Countries of Where It’s Most Dangerous to Follow Jesus. A government official, however, disputed the claim.

“Iran does not discriminate against or persecute any recognized religious minority,” Alireza Miryousefi, head of press for the Iranian Mission to the U.N. told the *Post*. “Including the large Christian community inside Iran, who are free to worship in the many churches that can be found across Iran.” {eo}

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