

Iran Sentences 4 Christians to 45 Years in Prison for 'Threatening National Security'

Iran's hardline government has sentenced four Christians to harsh prison terms for putting their faith in Jesus Christ.

Pastor Victor Bet-Tamraz and his wife Shamiram Issavi, who are ethnic Assyrian Christians, and Amin Afshar Naderi and Hadi Asgari, who are Christian converts from Islam, were sentenced to a combined total of 45 years in prison for allegedly conducting "illegal church activities" and spreading propaganda which reportedly "threaten national security."

"These Christians were solely arrested for practicing their Christian faith, including attending Christmas gatherings and organizing house churches," Mike Ansari of Heart4Iran, told *CBN News*.

In 2014, Pastor Victor Bet-Tamraz was arrested when plain-clothed security forces raided his home during a Christmas party. In 2017, an Iranian Revolutionary Court sentenced him, along with Hadi Asgari, to 10 years in prison for "forming a group composed of more than two people with the purpose of disrupting national security" in relation to their church activities. The same court sentenced Amin Afshar Naderi to five years in prison for allegedly insulting Islam.

In January 2018, Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran sentenced Shamiram Issavi to five years in prison for "membership of a group with the purpose of disrupting national security" and another five years in prison for "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security."

Iran, which is overwhelmingly Muslim, has a constitution that has restricted freedoms for non-Muslim citizens. {eo}

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