

Afghan Christian Facing Islamic Execution

Yesterday's Sunday Times featured the case of Said Musa, a 45-year-old father of six who is facing execution for converting to from Islam to Christianity.

Barnabas Fund has been working behind the scenes with others to set Said free, but the group reports high-level talks involving U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and representatives of the French and German governments have failed to move Afghan President Hamid Karzai to act.

According to Barnabas Fund, Said has been languishing in prison, where he has been tortured and abused, since his arrest last May. Said is yet to stand trial and no defense lawyer will represent him.

"Said Musa's plight can be seen as a test case for how Western governments are going to respond to the treatment of converts to Christianity in the Muslim world," said Dr Patrick Sookhdeo, International Director of Barnabas Fund. "I urge you to join us in putting pressure on them to use their influence to achieve for everyone the universal right to full freedom of religion."

Said is not the only Afghan convert to Christianity whose life is in immediate danger. Twenty-five-year-old Shoaib Assadullah is also being held in prison and has been threatened with the death penalty for apostasy unless he returns to Islam. He was arrested last October after giving a New Testament to another Afghan.

Apostasy is a crime punished by death under Islamic law, which is upheld by the Afghan constitution. Wherever Islamic law is in force, converts from Islam are in real peril. At the end of last month Abdolreza Gharabat was hanged for apostasy in Iran

after he claimed to be God.