

AG Pastor Sentenced to 3 1/2 Years in Iranian Prison

Vruir Avanesian, senior pastor of an Assemblies of God church in a Tehran, Iran, suburb, was arrested in January, taken to Evin Prison and interrogated for 15 days before his release pending trial. Last week, the Revolutionary Court of Tehran sentenced Avanesian to 3 1/2 years in prison.

Avanesian, who was conducting a home prayer meeting when arrested, was reportedly guilty of “antigovernment activities” and “promoting ideas contrary to the sanctity of the Islamic Republic of Iran.”

The sentencing is cause for deep concern, as Avanesian, 61, is in poor health, having to undergo kidney dialysis three times a week in addition to having heart problems.

AG General Superintendent George O. Wood expresses his objection to the “flagrant violation” of Avanesian’s basic human rights, adding, “We are communicating in every way possible to Christians throughout the world to enlist prayer that the authorities will grant his release.”

However, sources state that Avanesian is not the only Christian targeted. Authorities have confronted several other Christian pastors and leaders, demanding they stop their evangelism efforts or leave the country, with several being ordered to leave.

To read an extended report from AG World Missions on Avanesian’s sentencing, [click here](#).