

AG's George Wood Urges Prayer for Pastor Arrested in Iran

Security forces in Iran arrested pastor Robert Asserian on Tuesday after disrupting a morning prayer service in progress at Central Assembly of God in Tehran.

Before going to the church, authorities raided Pastor Asserian's home, where they confiscated a computer and several books. Then they found Pastor Asserian at the church, leading the prayer service, immediately arrested him and announced the church's imminent closure.

At last report, the pastor's whereabouts are unknown. Every indication points to the possibility that Iranian authorities are pursuing the closure of Central Assembly in violation of Iranian law and human rights.

Pastor Asserian's arrest is one of several that have taken place in the days leading up to Iran's presidential elections, scheduled for less than a month from now. These incidents appear to be an attempt to stop worship services from being conducted in Farsi, the language of the majority of Iranians. Services are allowed in Armenian, a minority language that most Iranians do not speak or even understand.

Believers in Iran fear that the closure of Central Assembly in Tehran will set a precedent for closing all Farsi-language churches in Iran. Such a move would essentially remove all open witness of the gospel of Christ in the country.

We appeal to our member churches of the World Assemblies of God Fellowship to earnestly pray for Pastor Asserian and all fellow believers in the Iranian Assemblies of God. We also request prayer that the authorities in Iran will uphold the rights of people to worship freely according to their conscience.