

Ayatollah Khamenei Could Spare Pastor Nadarkhani's Life

Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani remains on Iran's death row awaiting a new trial. Iran's Supreme Court sent the case back to the lower court that tried him, according to student news agency ISNA.

Nadarkhani was sentenced to death in 2009 for apostasy. He lost his appeal last year and has maintained his Christian faith despite the threat of death.

"The court will issue a new verdict ... if Nadarkhani appeals the verdict then the case will be sent again to the Supreme Court," a statement from Iran's Supreme Court said.

Nadarkhani's attorney, Mohammad Dadkhah, told CNN on Monday that the Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei will personally decide the fate of Pastor Nadarkhani. Khamenei is an Islamic jurist and the final arbiter of questions of Shariah law.

The step to involve the most powerful leader in Iran is unusual and demonstrates that the Islamic nation is feeling pressure from the international community, according to Jordan Sekulow, executive director of the American Center for Law and Justice.

"Now that Iran's Supreme Leader will be considering the case, it is imperative that our top diplomat, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, personally intervenes in working for Pastor Youcef's unconditional release," Sekulow says.

ACLJ hand-delivered a petition to Clinton the moment the State Department opened its doors on Tuesday morning. The petition

included more than 127,000 names.

Let's keep praying for Pastor Youcef and his family.