

Execution Hangs Over Head of Full Gospel Pastor in Iran

Persecution watchers are calling for massive intercession as Pastor Yousef Nadarkhani faces death in Iran at any moment.

Nadarkhani was sentenced to death for apostasy—leaving Islam—in September 2010. He appealed to Iran's Supreme Court, but lost. Yousef claims that, although raised in a Muslim home, he was never a Muslim by choice, conviction, belief or consistent practice, and that he should therefore not be regarded as an apostate, according to International Christian Concern.

"A written verdict should be delivered within one week. However, the timing of the implementation of the sentence is unpredictable, and some fear that pastor Yousef could be executed before a written verdict is delivered," ICC reports. "Recall that Yousef is a pastor within the Full Gospel Church of Iran denomination in the northern city of Rasht."

Nadarkhani has been detained in prison since October 2009. Yousef and his wife, Fatemeh, have two young sons, ages 9 and 7. Fatemeh was detained for four months in 2010. Now, the international community is pressing Iran for the unconditional release of Nadarkhani.

"Every hour of Youcef Nadarkhani's captivity by the government of Iran brings the international community one step closer to witnessing the horrific injustice of a man being sentenced to death because of his adherence to his Christian faith, a denial of the fundamental human right of freedom of religion," said Jordan Sekulow, executive director of the American Council on Law and Justice.

"Iran's imposition of the death penalty against Pastor Nadarkhani not only blatantly violates the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Iran has pledged to uphold, but it also violates Iran's own constitution which provides that the investigation of individuals' beliefs is forbidden, and no one may be molested or taken to task simply for holding a certain belief," Sekulow said.

"The ACLJ is working tirelessly to call attention to the plight of Youcef Nadarkhani and mobilize elements of the international community, along with members of Congress and the State Department, to take all available actions in order to save the life of a Christian Pastor and give the government of Iran an opportunity to live up to its international obligations."

Meanwhile, ICC is asking for Christians to pray:

Yousef's life will be spared;□ Yousef will remain firm in his faith and know the presence and peace of Jesus each day;□ his wife, Fatemeh, and their two sons will know the comfort and hope of Jesus, and that the family will be reunited soon; □ Christians throughout Iran will not be intimidated but will know the Lord's enabling and guidance; and all officials involved will love mercy, act justly, learn about Jesus and choose to follow Him.