

Iran Convicts 6 Christian Converts for House Church Membership

Six Iranian converts to Christianity were convicted of crimes related to their membership in a house church, a news service has reported.

Mohabat News, which reports on news of Christians inside Iran, published a report on Sunday claiming that four men, a woman and her teenaged son were convicted by a Revolutionary Court in Shiraz, in southwestern Iran.

The four men were found guilty of attending a house church, spreading Christianity, having contact with foreign ministries, propaganda against the Iranian regime, and disrupting national security, Mohabat reported.

The news service identified the men as Mojtaba Seyyed-Alaedin Hossein; Homayoun Shokouhi ; Mohammad-Reza Partoei (Koorosh); and Vahid Hakkani.

Each was sentenced to 44 months in prison. Hossein and Shokouhi each received an additional eight months, Mohabat reported.

Also convicted was Fariba Nazemina, who is the wife of Shokouhi, and her son, Nima Shokouhi. Mohabat did not specify the crimes for which the mother and son were found guilty, but reported that each received a suspended two-year prison sentence.

The six were arrested in February 2012 after they gathered for worship at a house in Shiraz. They were caught in part of a wider crackdown on Christian churches during that period.

They were held in jail more than a year before their court appearances. They were tried in Iran's Revolutionary Court, a subsidiary of the country's judiciary that typically deals with cases involving national security.

In Iran, an officially Islamic country where judges are required to be senior Muslim clerics, religion is considered a national-security issue.

Iran's courts are routinely criticised by human-rights groups and other nations for their secrecy and lack of due process.

The convictions were handed down on the day after Iranians concluded a presidential election and were absorbing the news of the victory of Hassan Rouhani.

Iran's official news agency, IRNA, did not mention the verdict, and the case received almost no attention beyond Mohabat's report.