

Iran Sentences Christian Convert to 10 Years in Prison on Political Charges

Mostafa Bordbar, a Christian convert, has been sentenced to 10 years in prison for being part of an “anti-security organization” and “gathering with intent to commit crimes against Iranian national security.”

The verdict was delivered to his lawyer on July 31 by a judge from Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran, following his trial in June. Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) has been informed that Bordbar is currently being held in Evin Prison.

Bordbar was arrested on Dec. 27, 2012, along with 50 other **Christian converts** who had gathered to celebrate Christmas in a house in northern Tehran. They were detained, interrogated for several hours and forced to hand over personal details, including Facebook and email addresses and passwords. Most of the group was released; however, Bordbar and Vruir Avanesian, an Armenian Christian pastor, were arrested.

Bordbar had been arrested several years earlier in his hometown of Rasht for converting to Christianity and attending a house church. Branch 1 of the court in Rasht found him guilty of “apostasy” (abandoning Islam), but he was released after posting a bail of 200 million Iranian rials. Despite this, the conviction of **apostasy** remained on his record. When Bordbar subsequently attempted to set up a company, he was refused permission on the basis of this criminal record.

“CSW is deeply concerned at reports of Mostafa Bordbar’s harsh sentence,” says CSW’s Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas. “Although he was convicted of crimes of a seemingly political nature, it is clear that, as with other Christians who have been recently

imprisoned in Iran, this is nothing more than a means of justifying manifestly excessive or unjust sentences. CSW urges the Iranian authorities to release Mostafa Bordbar and all those who have been imprisoned on account of their faith. We also urge the Iranian authorities to ensure that religious minorities are free to exercise their right to adopt any faith of their own choice, a right that is enshrined in the International Convent on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is party.”