

# Jailed Iranian Christian Pastor Comforts Newtown Families

Farshid Fathi, an Iranian Christian pastor, is beginning the third year of a six-year prison sentence on a conviction of “being chief-director of foreign organizations in Iran and gathering funds for these organizations.”

Farshid is one of several believers arrested over the past few years in the Iranian government’s attempts to suppress Christianity. The details of his arrest were only recently released.

At about 6 a.m. on Dec. 26, 2010, security officials wearing plain clothes surrounded the home of Farshid’s father. When Farshid’s father opened the door to go to work, they forced their way into the home. They woke everyone in the house, including Farshid and his family who had stayed there Christmas night.

The authorities began a thorough search of the house. They questioned everyone present and, after completing the search, allowed Farshid to take his daughter to school.

“At the same time, another group of government agents attacked Farshid Fathi’s own house to arrest him, not knowing they were not home,” a source told *Mohabat News*. “They broke into the house illegally, destroying the entrance door, and searched everywhere confiscating whatever they thought could be used as evidence against Mr. Fathi, including his photos, flash drives, camera memory cards, the hard drive of his PC, laptop, documents, and even some money and his gas card.”

After authorities from the two raids communicated, they realized they had accidentally allowed Farshid to leave his

father's house. Livid over the mistake and sure Farshid had fled, the agents threatened the family with "harsh consequences" if he did not return.

But an hour later, Farshid did return. Authorities then beat him, insulted him and handcuffed him before transferring him to the Ministry of Intelligence building in Tehran. From there, he was taken to Evin prison, where he spent several months in solitary confinement.

A Christian prisoner who was Farshid's cellmate for a few weeks asked Farshid why he returned home, knowing that the agents were waiting to arrest him. "I couldn't leave my wife and children alone," he replied.

Farshid's faith remains strong even in prison. In December, he responded to the Newtown, Conn., tragedy by writing the following letter to parents of the victims:

*To the fathers and mothers who lost their precious children in the Connecticut tragedy,*

*I really don't know what word in the world could comfort you, what relief could be helpful for your broken heart, and which hand could clean the tears which fall from your cheeks. I just want to say: I am so sorry and you are in my prayers.*

*I am sure these high walls cannot stop my prayers for you. Before this tragedy happened, I was thinking about my suffering that I'm going through because of my Lord Jesus Christ, especially being far from my lovely kids. But when I imagine how hard your pain is I forget my sufferings. Because I know by God's grace I will see my kids at the latest in 2017 when I come out from prison. But unfortunately you have to wait a bit longer. So I would like to express my deepest sorrow for your loss.*

*I believe we will have enough time in heaven with our lovely children forever. There is no gun there, there is no prison,*

*and there is no pain.*

*In the hope of that glorious day.*

*Your Brother in Christ from prison in Iran,*

*Farshid Fathi*

*17 December 2012*