

Unjust Persecution of Pastor Draws International Condemnation

Iran certainly isn't known for its sympathy for believers, especially those who have converted to Christianity from Islam. And this act of persecution is certainly typical of its tyranny.

Pastor Matthias Haghnejad, a prominent figure in the underground church in Iran, has been subjected to unjust persecution in his homeland. Recently arrested on contested accusations of undermining state security, Pastor Haghnejad has been relocated to a prison over 1,000 miles away from his residence, in the southern region of Iran.

Satan's Nightmare: Christian 'Great Awakening' Exploding in Iran

According to Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), Pastor Haghnejad was transferred to a prison in Minab city, Hormozgan province, far from his home in Bandar Anzali. These latest actions toward a Christian pastor aren't surprising.

Pastor Haghnejad, along with another church leader, Pastor Yousef Nadarkhani, face charges of attempting to destabilize the state. These charges were brought against them after a couple from their denomination allegedly incriminated them under duress.

✘ The credibility of these accusations has been called into question, as CSW's Founder President Mervyn Thomas highlighted the psychological pressure exerted on the accusers, who had only a passing acquaintance with one of the pastors.

This is not the first time Pastor Haghnejad has faced such allegations. He was previously acquitted of similar charges in 2014, only to have them reinstated in January 2022. It was revealed that political police received permission from then-chief justice and current President Ebrahim Raisi to overturn a Supreme Court decision that had ruled in Pastor Haghnejad's favor.

The repeated legal troubles faced by Pastors Haghnejad and Nadarkhani have drawn international condemnation. CSW, appalled by the relentless judicial persecution, has called on Iran to respect the right to freedom of religion or belief for all citizens and demanded the immediate and unconditional release of the pastors and others imprisoned for their faith.

Despite a crackdown on house churches, the underground church movement in the country has shown significant growth, as reported by the Christian support organization Open Doors. However, Christians, particularly those who have converted from Islam, continue to face increasing oppression and persecution.

As the international community rallies in defense of Pastor Haghnejad and others who are unjustly imprisoned, the hope remains that Iran will uphold its commitments to human rights and allow its citizens to practice their faith freely without fear of persecution or discrimination. {eo}

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