

Iran Martyr's Daughter: 'They Couldn't Stop My Father'

On Dec. 3, 1990, 13-year-old Rashin Soodmand's life changed forever. It was the day she learned the Iranian government had executed her father, Pastor Hossein Soodmand, for the "crime" of apostasy—leaving Islam to follow another faith.

Growing up, Rashin was accustomed to her father's frequent confrontations with Iranian authorities. Since his decision to follow Christ at age 17, Hossein's witness for Christ during Iran's Islamic Revolution had led to frequent arrests as well as physical and psychological torture. Yet he continued to be a bold follower of Christ, planting churches and sharing the gospel with fellow Iranians despite the risk.

"He was jealous for his God, and you could see it from his faith and behavior," Rashin said on the *Forbidden Faith* podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network. "He was loving and very strong. Although he was quiet, his zeal for the Lord was obvious."

Eventually, Iranian government authorities gave Rashin's father a choice: Abandon his Christian faith and live, or remain faithful to Christ and die. Rejecting suggestions that he flee the country for safety, Hossein maintained his faithful witness for Christ and was executed by hanging. Following his execution, the government denied Hossein's family the right to bury his body, instead leaving him in an unmarked grave in an Iranian cemetery designated for "the cursed."

As Rashin mourned the death of her earthly father, she experienced the comforting presence of her heavenly Father. And while her father's death required her to grow up quickly and assume new responsibilities in her family, it also helped

her draw closer to and rely more heavily on God. A few days after learning of her father's execution, Rashin renewed her own commitment to serving God, dedicating her life to following in her father's footsteps—no matter the cost.

"At that moment, my Christian faith became more real for me," Rashin said. "I could feel God's caring hand, so that made me want to follow this God and this Jesus whom my father wouldn't deny. I didn't want to deny God either."

After graduating from high school, Rashin attended a Bible school in England that offered a program for Iranian students. She married a classmate, and they both felt led to take the gospel to Iran. For nearly two decades, Rashin and her husband, Amir, have been ministering to Iranians inside and outside of Iran.

Although Rashin felt the void left by her father's death in a variety of ways, she takes comfort and inspiration from knowing that her father's bold faith, even in the face of death, helped further God's kingdom in Iran—and in her own heart.

"I am always saying to people that I am happy that my father didn't die in an accident or from a disease," Rashin said. "I am happy that he died for his faith and that he stood for his faith. Now we can see the results."

Listen to Rashin share more of her story on this episode of *Forbidden Faith*. Listeners can request a free copy of the 2021 Global Prayer Guide from The Voice of the Martyrs to help them pray more specifically for Christians in Iran and other restricted nations. {eo}

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