

2-24-2012 Persecution in Iran, Mali, Turkey, Burma

CBN News, 2-23-2012

Those close to the case of a Christian pastor in Iran who's facing a death sentence for refusing to recant his faith now fear he could be killed any day now.

The **American Center for Law and Justice** warned there is an "increased likelihood" that the execution order against Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani has been signed and could be carried out at any time.

"The likelihood that the Iranian regime will execute him increases by the day," ACLJ Executive Director Jordan Sekulow said.

He added that the situation is more "dire" than ever.

Sign the online petition urging more pressure on Iran to release Pastor Youcef Nararkhani and to dismiss his death sentence. go to ACLJ.org

Meanwhile, several members of Congress have joined the fight to save Nadarkhani's life. Rep. Joe Pitts and seven other congressmen introduced a resolution in the House of Representatives Feb. 17, which condemned the Iranian government for its "persecution, imprisonment and sentencing" of Pastor Nadarkhani.

"Iran has become more isolated because of their drive for nuclear weapons, and the fundamentalist government has stepped up persecution of religious minorities to deflect criticism," Pitts told FoxNews.com.

"The persecuted are their own citizens whose only crime is practicing their faith," he said.

Almost 90 members of Congress previously signed a letter supporting Nadarkhani.

Nadarkhani was sentenced to death for apostasy in November 2011 by an Iranian court. However, international pressure forced the regime to reconsider the verdict.

Despite promises of a decision by Iran's supreme leader, Nadarkhani is still awaiting a ruling while in prison and facing continued pressure and mistreatment from authorities.

He has been in prison for more than two years and has refused to renounce his faith.

Pitts said it is time for Iran to decide whether they will live up to their international obligations as a member of the United Nations and a signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Sekulow said the congressional resolution is an important step in keeping the pressure on Iran.

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Bob,

Our sources in Iran believe Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani's execution order has been issued. He is still alive, but his death is imminent unless the Supreme Leader of Iran intervenes.

Our aggressive international efforts to secure the release of this persecuted pastor continue to grow. The White House and U.S. State Department have now condemned Iran and joined the call for his release.

Take action by signing our petition calling for Pastor Youcef's immediate release.

In just four days, more than 100,000 people have signed the ACLJ's Petition to Free Christian Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani. If you have already signed, thank you.

Please forward this message to your friends and people in your church and use the "Like" buttons in this email to share it on Facebook.

It is critically urgent that we keep Pastor Youcef's story in the international media to pressure Iran for his immediate release.

The ACLJ has helped spread the news about Pastor Youcef's execution order across the world, including major print and television media as far away as Brazil and Australia.

Our Tweet for Youcef campaign is growing dramatically, reaching over 600,000 Twitter accounts each day on Pastor Youcef's behalf.

It is critically important that we urge Congress and the United Nations to call for Pastor Youcef's release while there is still time. Take action now.

Jordan Sekulow

ACLJ Executive Director

P.S. Your efforts have helped keep Pastor Youcef alive. Please continue to pray for this courageous man, and please keep spreading the word about his plight. Thank you.

VOM-USA Prayer Update for February 24, 2012

Mali -- Safe Houses Foster Evangelism

Source: VOM Contacts

Jeremiah 10:6-7

Conversions to Christianity have increased dramatically in Mali in recent months, due in part to the evangelistic work of Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) who have been trained at VOM-supported safe houses. "Not only are the safe houses a hiding place [for new converts running from Muslim families], but they are also places where MBBs can strengthen their faith," a VOM worker said. "With their training ... they become real national leaders who embark courageously on the evangelization of their compatriots and support the building of a true local or indigenous church." These evangelists are the main distributors of Christian materials in the country. "That explains the explosion of conversions they are noting these days," the VOM worker said. "The Muslim communities note now a real drop of their members." Pray for the continued spread of the gospel in Mali and for the protection of these courageous believers.

Turkey -- Visa Restrictions Hinder Missionaries

Source: VOM Contacts

Phillipians 3:14-16

The Turkish government recently tightened its visa regulations, hindering the work of foreign missionaries in the country. The new visa policy, which became effective on Feb. 1, 2012, allows 180-day multiple-entry visas, but visitors may spend only 90 consecutive days in the country and must wait 90 days between visits. Christian workers will have to leave Turkey every three months and remain outside the country for three months before returning. "We will only be able to spend half our time in Turkey," wrote one worker. Since the beginning of February, the Turkish government has expelled a number of missionaries who had resident permits. Others who have left the country and tried to re-enter have been turned away at the border under the new visa regulations. Please pray that the Church in Turkey will continue to grow and develop mature leaders despite increasing government restrictions.

Burma -- Evicted Christians Get New Homes

Source: VOM Contacts

Ephesians 3:16-17

Forty families that were evicted from their villages because of their faith recently began construction on their new homes. After a local Buddhist monk drove the families, including about 300 people, out of their homes, VOM and a partner organization helped them buy land, pay taxes and begin construction on the first five houses. The Buddhist monk took offense when the believers refused to sponsor Buddhist activities. The situation remained tense for two months, until the monk eventually expelled them from their villages. Pray that these believers will remain rooted in Jesus Christ and that their new community will be a blessing.