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IRAN Blasphemy trial of five Iranian Christians postponed

The blasphemy trial of five members from the Church of Iran was adjourned today due to a lack of evidence.

The trial of Pastor Behrouz Sadegh-Khandjani, Mehdi Furutan, Mohammad Beliad, Parviz Khalaj and Nazly Beliad has been adjourned until 12 April in order to give the prosecution more time to gather evidence. Lawyers representing the five men have consistently maintained that there are no legal grounds for the blasphemy charges, and remain optimistic that the case will eventually be dismissed.

In an earlier trial at the Revolutionary Court in Shiraz, the five men were handed a one-year sentence for Crimes against the Islamic Order, which their legal team believes will also be withdrawn on appeal.

CSW's National Director Stuart Windsor said, "CSW urges the Iranian government to ensure that these men receive due process, and are acquitted of all charges that have no legal bearing under Iranian law. However, we remain concerned for Pastor Yousef Nadarkhani, who awaits an appeal against his death sentence for apostasy, and for the seven Baha'i leaders detained since 2008, who recently had their 20-year prison sentence reinstated, despite already enduring 30 months of detention without trial. The international community must press Iran to end the arbitrary arrest and imprisonment of religious minorities purely on account of their faith."