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IRAN Mexican senate adopts official statement condemning Pastor Nadarkhani's death sentence for apostasy

The Mexican senate yesterday approved an official statement condemning the death sentence for apostasy currently faced by Pastor Yousef Nadarkhani in Iran.

The statement says that “although Iranian officials have claimed that he was sentenced to death for different crimes and not that of apostasy, the international community has consistently spoken out in defense of Mr. Nadarkhani’s civil and political rights.”

“As such, the statement proposes that the Senate join the international community, and condemns the death sentence handed down to Yousef Nadarkhani for religious reasons.”

The statement quotes Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Articles 2 and 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Iran has ratified. Article 18 of the ICCPR states that “No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or adopt a religion or belief of his choice”, and asserts that “freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs may be subject only to limitations prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.”

The Mexican Senate joins members of the international community including Britain, the US, the Council of the European Union, Canada and members of the Uruguayan Senate in condemning the death sentence for Pastor Nadarkhani on religious grounds.

Pastor Nadarkhani’s apostasy case has been referred to Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Hoseyni Khamenei, for a decision. Two letters have been written to the Supreme Leader by the court in Rasht, asking for his opinion on the case, but so far there has been no response. CSW’s sources have been told that a decision may be issued by the court in mid-December.

On a recent trip to Mexico, CSW’s Chief Executive, Mervyn Thomas, met with members of the Senate, including Senator José Luis García Zalvidea, and discussed a number of issues, including the case of Pastor Nadarkhani. He also spoke at a two-day conference on religious freedom, jointly hosted by CSW and the Federal District’s Human Rights Commission in Mexico City, alongside Jorge Lee, a respected legal expert on religious freedom and equality in Mexico, representing recently-launched CSW Mexico.

He said, “CSW welcomes the resolution by the Mexican Senate. The pastor’s life remains in the balance and it is vital that international petitions for his release continue and that international actors continue to urge Iran to uphold its obligations concerning religious freedom under the ICCPR.”