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IRAN | Two more house church members arrested in Shiraz

Two members of the Church of Iran, who belong to a house church that was raided on Friday, October 12 by security forces, were arrested today in the city of Shiraz in Fars Province. Their arrest came after they were summoned to the Intelligence Ministry's detention centre, Pelak (Plaque 100), where seven other members of their house church are currently being held.

Afsar Bahmani, a middle aged woman in need of specialist medication due to heart and kidney complications, was detained at around 1pm along with a man named Massoud Rezaie, after responding to the summons.

Both are converts and long standing Christians. Mrs. Bahami was present during the raid of their house church on October 12, which resulted in the arrest of seven members, but was not detained at that time.

These arrests are occurring against the backdrop of a sharp upsurge in the harassment and persecution of Christians, particularly converts. Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) has received reports of a significant increase in arrests during recent weeks.

CSW has also been informed that another member of the Church of Iran, Pastor Benham Irani, remains in critical condition in Ghezel Hesar Prison, where he has been denied adequate treatment for severe stomach ulcers and colon complications.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "CSW is deeply concerned about the arrests of Mrs. Bahmani and Mr. Rezaie, which appear to be part of a renewed wave of arrests of house church members in Shiraz. We are particularly concerned for Mrs. Bahmani's health and for Pastor Irani, whose condition continues to deteriorate. The harassment and arrest of religious minorities solely on account of their faith contravenes international covenants to which Iran is a signatory, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which guarantees the right to freedom of religion. We call on the Iranian authorities to ensure that Mrs. Bahmani and Pastor Irani are allowed access to specialist medical care. We also urge the Iranian government to uphold the rule of law and to release all who have been detained on account of their faith immediately and unconditionally."