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IRAN | Human rights lawyer Mohammad Ali Dadkhah jailed

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) has received reports indicating that Mohammad Ali Dadkhah, the prominent human rights lawyer who served as the lead advocate in the apostasy case of Pastor Yousef Nadarkhani, was jailed on Saturday, September 29.

Mr. Dadkhah was initially arrested in July 2009, along with his daughter and three of his associates, and was accused of “keeping weapons, opium as well as documents” that illustrated links with foreign “enemies”. He was released on September 13, 2009, after posting bail of around \$500,000.

On July 3, 2011, the 15th Branch of the Revolutionary Tribunal disbarred Mr. Dadkhah for “actions and propaganda against the Islamic regime” and keeping banned books in his home. He was also sentenced to nine years in jail and a ten-year ban on practicing law or teaching at university. Mr. Dadkhah appealed against the sentence, however, while in court representing a client on April 28, 2012, he was informed the appeal had failed, and that he would soon be summoned to jail to serve the nine-year sentence.

Mr. Dadkhah, who has represented religious minorities and political and human rights activists, was a co-founder of the Defenders of Human Rights Centre (DHRC). Members of this organization have faced increasing harassment since its forcible closure by the authorities in December 2008.

Speaking to the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran after his current sentence was handed down in July 2011, Mr. Dadkhah had said, “I thank God that I did not get a worse sentence than this...I am not at all worried about these sentences, because I have acted lawfully and in defense of my homeland, and it is natural for someone who takes a step in the direction of law and order to be treated badly by those who are against law and order.”

Mr. Dadkhah’s detention is the latest development in Iran’s on-going assault on civil society, which has so far resulted in the detentions of over 45 journalists, activists and human rights defenders. The continuing harassment of human rights defenders effectively limits the availability of legal representation for political and human rights activists, and for people facing charges relating to the freedom of thought, conscience or belief.

CSW’s Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston said, “The imprisonment of Mr. Dadkhah is a clear miscarriage of justice and further proof that Iran’s campaign against civil society continues to gather pace. Mr. Dadkhah has clearly been victimized because of his diligence in ensuring due process for political and human rights activists facing trumped up charges, and this renders his conviction and imprisonment an even greater travesty. The persecution of human rights defenders is a breach of Iran’s international obligations, and pressure must be maintained on the regime to respect international law and the rights of all of its citizens. We urge the Iranian government to respect the rule of law and release Mr. Dadkhah and other innocent people currently detained following questionable charges and flawed judicial processes.”