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## **IRAN | Nadarkhani Released, Imprisoned Lawyer's Health Deteriorates**

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) has learned that Pastor Yousef Nadarkhani, who was re-imprisoned on Dec. 25, 2012, was released on Jan. 7, 2013.

In September 2012, Pastor Nadarkhani was acquitted of apostasy but received a three year sentence for evangelizing Muslims. Because he had already spent close to three years in Lakan Prison in Rasht, the pastor was released after posting bail. However, in a highly irregular move, he was returned to jail on Christmas day on the orders of prison authorities, who claimed he had been released too early due to the insistence of his lawyer, Mohammed Ali Dadkhah. Dadkhah, a prominent human rights lawyer, was subsequently jailed for 10 years and disbarred in September 2012 for "actions and propaganda against the Islamic regime" and keeping banned books in his home. He was also banned from practicing or teaching law for 10 years.

Dadkhah is currently held in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison. Concerns have been expressed for his well-being following reports that he is suffering from memory loss and is under pressure to make a televised confession of guilt.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We are pleased to learn of Pastor Nadarkhani's release. While we welcome this news, we remain concerned that like so many other Christians who have been unjustly detained, there is always a risk of re-arrest. We are also concerned to learn of Mr. Dadkhah's condition and hold the regime responsible for the deterioration in his health. Moreover, official attempts to justify his imprisonment by attempting to coerce an "on air" confession are not only reprehensible but are also clear indications that the charges leveled against him were spurious. CSW calls for the immediate release of Mr. Dadkhah and for an end to the campaign of harassment of civil society. We also continue to call on the Iranian government to uphold the rule of law and allow the country's religious minorities to enjoy religious freedom as guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is party."