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## IRAN | Five Church of Iran Members to Face Trial on Political Charges

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) has learned that the trial of five members of the Church of Iran denomination, who have been detained since Oct. 12, 2012, will begin at the Revolutionary Court in Shiraz, Fars Province, on March 10.

Mohammad Roghangir, Surush Saraie, Eskandar Rezaie, Shahin Lahooti and Massoud Rezaie have been charged with disturbing public order, evangelizing, action against national security and an internet activity against the system.

The five men were among seven people arrested on Oct. 12, 2012 during an evening raid by the security services on a house in Shiraz where a prayer service was underway. They were initially held in Plaque 100, the Intelligence Ministry's notorious detention center, before being transferred to Adel-Abad Prison, where they were detained separately from other prisoners.

According to Iranian media outlet Mohabat News, the trial of four Iranian Christians arrested on Feb. 8, 2012 on charges of participating in house-church services, evangelizing and promoting Christianity, having contact with foreign Christian ministries, distributing propaganda against the regime and disturbing national security, is currently underway in Branch 3 of the Revolutionary Court in Shiraz. Mohabat News reports that Mojtaba Seyyed-Alaedin Hossein, Mohammad-Reza Partoei (also known as Koroush), Vahid Hakkani, and Homayoun Shokouhi, who were also arrested at a house church gathering and detained in Adel-Abad Prison, have been brought in chains to several court appearances. During their last appearance on December 28, 2012, the presiding judge announced that he would issue a verdict after the end of Norouz Celebrations.

CSW's Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston said, "Once again Iranian Christians face charges couched in political terms that in reality stem from their choice of faith and desire to exercise the right to worship in community with others, as guaranteed in article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iran is party. Furthermore, the men from the Church of Iran face an additional accusation of allegedly indulging in subversive internet activity, despite having been arrested at a prayer gathering. Bearing in mind that the shackling of prisoners is illegal under Iranian law, and that Iran is a signatory of the ICCPR, CSW urges the Iranian authorities to uphold the rule of law and to respect the right to freedom of religion or belief in its entirety, including the right of all of its citizens to manifest their belief in community with others."

