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IRAN | CSW Expresses Concern Over Woman's Health

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is extremely concerned to learn of a serious deterioration in the health of a 35-year-old Iranian Christian woman who is serving a four-year sentence in Evin Prison.

Maryam Naghash Zargaran, who was imprisoned in July 2013, has a history of heart complications and underwent cardiovascular surgery several years ago. According to CSW's sources, Maryam is currently in the hospital under guard. Her condition has been exacerbated by prison conditions, and she is said to be in a critical condition.

Maryam was arrested in late 2012, after two years of interrogation by the authorities. At the time of her arrest, security agents had searched her home, confiscating Christian materials and a computer. Following her arrest, Maryam was held for three days in Vozara detention center, a facility run by the Iranian Intelligence Ministry. She was subsequently transferred to the women's ward in Evin Prison, where she suffered interrogation for 19 days, before being released after posting bail of 70 million Tomans (approximately \$61,000), and surrendering the title deeds of a family home.

On Jan. 6 2013, Maryam received a summons to court. At a hearing that took place a few days later at Branch 28 of the Islamic Revolutionary Court in Tehran, she was charged under article 610 of the Islamic Penal Code with "conducting propaganda against the Islamic regime and acting against the national security." The court also determined that she had set up house churches and propagated Christianity, activities it deemed as "being in line with the hostile aims of the UK and Israelis to spread house churches inside Iran and corrupt Islamic society." Maryam was found guilty and sentenced to four years imprisonment on March 9. On July 15, she was told to report to the Shahid Moghades Court to fulfill her sentence, and was subsequently transferred to Evin Prison to begin the sentence.

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of CSW, said, "We are extremely concerned to learn of Maryam Naghash Zargaran's deteriorating condition. Like so many others, she has been detained on political charges simply for practicing her faith peaceably. We urge President Rouhani to secure Maryam's immediate release from prison, where the conditions clearly caused her already fragile

health to decline dramatically. It is important that the international community does not forget the many prisoners of conscience held in Iran on false political charges, and ensures that President Rouhani fulfills his promise to release all political prisoners. The president must also be encouraged to be more proactive in guaranteeing freedom of religion and belief for all religious communities, in line with Iran's international obligations under the International Convent on Civil and Political Rights.”