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IRAN | Four Christians Sentenced to 80 Lashes

A court in the Iranian city of Rasht has sentenced four members of the Church of Iran denomination to 80 lashes each for drinking wine during a communion service.

The verdict, dated Oct. 6, charges Behzad Taalipasand, Mehdi Reza Omid (Youhan), Mehdi Dadkhah (Danial) and Amir Hatemi (Youhanna) with drinking alcohol and possession of a receiver and satellite antenna. They received the verdict on Oct. 20 and have 10 days to appeal the sentence.

Behzad Taalipasand and Mehdi Reza Omid (Youhan) [were detained](#) on Dec. 31, 2012 during a crackdown on house churches by the Iranian government.

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), said, "The sentences handed down to these members of the Church of Iran effectively criminalize the Christian sacrament of sharing in the Lord's Supper and constitute an unacceptable infringement on the right to practice faith freely and peaceably. We urge the Iranian authorities to ensure that the nation's legal practices and procedures do not contradict its international obligation under the International Convent on Civil and Political Rights to guarantee the full enjoyment of freedom of religion or belief by all of its religious communities."