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## IRAN | Lashing Sentences Carried Out

Two of the four members of the Church of Iran denomination sentenced to 80 lashes for taking wine during a communion service were lashed on Oct. 30.

Behzad Taalipasand and Mehdi Dadkhah (Danial) received 80 lashes each. According to CSW's sources, Behzad Taalipasand was whipped "with extreme violence." While reports suggest that Mehdi Reza Omidi's (Youhan) sentence will be carried out on Nov. 2, it is not yet known when or if Amir Hatemi (Youhanna) will be punished.

The group was charged with drinking alcohol and possession of a receiver and satellite antenna and were given 10 days to appeal. However, they received the written verdict on Oct. 20, although it was dated Oct. 6. It remains unclear whether their appeals were rejected, or whether the delay in receiving the verdict meant they ran out of time.

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

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of CSW, said, "CSW condemns these sentences in the strongest terms. These men are being punished for simply partaking in a sacrament practiced for centuries by Christian the world over. This appalling and unjust infringement on the right to manifest one's faith in practice, worship and observance has occurred despite Iran's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to uphold freedom of religion or belief for all of its religious communities. Moreover, the punishment meted out to these men for partaking in a legitimate act of worship amounts to a contravention of article 5 of the ICCPR, which prohibits inhuman or degrading punishment. We urge the Iranian government to bring the nation's legal practices and procedures in line with its international undertakings and to release these men without delay or further punishment."