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IRAN | Mostafa Bordbar Released From Prison

Iranian Christian Mostafa Bordbar was released from prison on Nov. 3, following a successful appeal against the 10 year prison sentence he received on July 31.

His release comes almost three months after he was imprisoned in Evin Prison on charges of being a member of an “anti-security organization” and “gathering with intent to commit crimes against Iranian national security.” An appeal court cleared him of all of charges on Oct. 30.

Bordbar was arrested on Dec. 27 2012, along with 50 other Christian converts who had gathered to celebrate Christmas in a house in northern Tehran. They were detained, interrogated for several hours and forced to hand over personal details, including Facebook and e-mail addresses and passwords. Most of the group was released. Bordbar and Vruir Avanesian, an Armenian-Christian pastor, were arrested. Pastor Avanesian was “temporarily” released on Jan. 10 after posting bail of \$60,000.

In other news, on Nov. 3, Pastor Saeed Abedini, the dual American/Iranian citizen and Christian convert imprisoned for eight years on political charges in January 2013, was moved to the notorious Rajal Shahr Prison in Karaj. The American Centre for Law and Justice (ACLJ) reports that Abedini has been placed in Ward 3 of the prison, which is known to house some of the most violent prisoners in the country.

Abedini’s transfer comes after he was placed in solitary confinement in May for taking part in a peaceful protest with other prisoners against the mistreatment of inmates at Evin Prison. Abedini has suffered health challenges following regular beatings while in prison and has been denied adequate medical care.

Finally, an Iranian opposition website reported that Abdolfattah Soltani, the prominent Iranian human rights lawyer who started a hunger strike on Nov. 2, has been moved from Evin Prison, although the details of his whereabouts are unclear. Soltani began the hunger strike on his 60th birthday to protest the lack of medical care given to fellow prisoners, despite suffering from serious digestive and stomach complications himself.

Soltani was arrested in September 2011 on charges of “being awarded the [2009] Nuremberg International Human Rights Award,” “interviewing with media about his clients’ cases,” and “co-founding the Defenders of Human Rights Center.” In January 2012, he was sentenced to 18 years in prison, exile and a 20-year ban on his legal practice. The sentence was later reduced to 13 years by an appeals court.

CSW’s Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, “CSW commends the Iranian judiciary for clearing Mr. Bordbar of charges that essentially amounted to a restriction of his right to adopt a faith of

his choosing, as guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iran is party. However, the constant mistreatment of Saeed Abedini is entirely unacceptable, amounting to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment under article 7 of the ICCPR. As with many other Christians, Pastor Abedini was jailed on the basis of illegitimate political charges. He should not be detained alongside violent prisoners and the Iranian regime will be held accountable for any deterioration in his physical well-being. Moreover, the habitual withholding of adequate medical attention from prisoners is in violation of article 10 of the ICCPR. CSW urges Iran to review the sentences of all who have faced unjust political charges and to treat every prisoner with humanity and with respect for their inherent dignity, in accordance with its international obligations.”