



6.9.14

IRAN | Pastor Irani Beaten In Prison, Taken to Unknown Location

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) has learned that Pastor Behnam Irani, who was sentenced in 2011 to six years imprisonment on political charges, was beaten in prison and transferred to an unknown location in the early hours of June 7.

Pastor Irani was summoned by Judge Mohammad Yari, Chief of the Sixth Chamber of the Revolutionary Tribunal at 6:30 a.m. on June 7. As the summons appeared irregular and contrary to judicial process, Pastor Irani rejected it and wrote a letter of protest. However, at 9 a.m., VEVAK intelligence agents entered his prison cell and proceeded to beat him before he was taken to see Mohammad Yari. He was subsequently transferred to an unknown location.

The assault on Pastor Irani is the latest of several reports in recent weeks of Iranian authorities using excessive violence against prisoners of conscience.

Pastor Irani is the leader of the Church of Iran congregation in Karaj. He was initially arrested in December 2006 and was sentenced in 2011 to six years imprisonment on charges of “action against the state” and “action against the order.”

Two weeks ago, Pastor Irani’s bible and other Christian literature was confiscated by authorities. Recent events have given rise to concerns that the authorities may be planning to add charges to his existing sentence.

During the first few months of his imprisonment in Ghezal Hesar, Pastor Irani was held incommunicado in a small cell, where guards repeatedly woke him from sleep as a form of psychological torture. He was moved to a cramped room where inmates could not lie down to sleep, before being transferred to a crowded, filthy cell, which he shares with 40 criminals, many of whom are violent. He has been subjected to physical and psychological pressure, and has suffered regular beatings from cell mates and prison authorities, as well as death threats.

In February 2014, Pastor Irani successfully underwent surgery to treat stomach and colon complications.

CSW’s Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, “We are deeply concerned to hear of the assault on Pastor Irani and his enforced disappearance, especially given his medical complications. We cannot begin to imagine the distress this news must be causing his family and friends. CSW urges the authorities to make Pastor Irani’s whereabouts known and to provide him with any medical treatment he may need following his beating at the hands of VEVAK security agents. Furthermore, we continue to call for his release, since in reality he is in prison on account of his

faith and in contravention of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is party. We also urge the Iranian authorities to end assaults on prisoners, as they violate the nation's obligations under article 10 of the ICCPR, which states that prisoners should be treated with humanity and with respect for their inherent human dignity.”