



1.7.15

IRAN | Christian Released From Prison

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) was informed that Amin Khaki, a member of the Church of Iran denomination, was released on bail on Jan. 3.

Khaki was part of a group of eight Christians who were detained and interrogated following a picnic on March 5. While most were later released, Khaki, Hossein Baraunzadeh (Daniel) and Rahman Bahman (Zia) were arrested. Amin Khaki was transferred to the Interim Ward of Ahwaz Prison on May 7, where he reportedly suffered severe mistreatment. Baraunzadeh and Bahman, who were imprisoned in Desful, were released in December.

In other news, Farshid Fathi Malayeri, an imprisoned Assemblies of God (AoG) pastor who is currently serving a six-year sentence for “action against national security”, “cooperating with foreign organization’s” and “evangelism”, has been given an additional one-year sentence following a trial on Dec. 29 at Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran.

Reports indicate the additional sentence is related to the controversial raid by security agents on Ward 350 of Evin Prison on April 17, which left 30 prisoners requiring medical treatment, including Pastor Fathi Malayeri, who suffered a broken foot. The prison authorities claim the raid was initiated following the discovery of two liters of alcohol in a ward adjacent to the one where Malayeri was held. They held him responsible.

Over the festive season, the government conducted its annual raids, which are described ironically as a “Christmas present” to Christians. According to Middle East Concern, on Dec. 25, security officials raided a house in Roudehen, arresting nine Christians. The following day, around 15 people were detained following a raid on Christmas celebrations at the Tehran home of Victor Bet-Tamarz, a prominent Assyrian pastor of Shahr-Ara Pentecostal Church. While most were released with a warning, they may be summoned for further investigation. Pastor Bet-Tamarz was detained at Evin Prison.

CSW’s Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, “While we welcome the news that Amin Khaki has been released on bail, we call for all charges against him to be dropped so that he can be free to get on with his life without fear of further harassment. CSW is extremely concerned at reports that Pastor Fathi Malayeri has been given an additional one-year sentence despite clear evidence that there was no validity to the accusations levelled against him. This is yet again another example of the authorities seeking to justify his imprisonment on trumped-up charges and together with the disappointing continuation of annual Christmas raids; it is further evidence of the ongoing suppression of freedom of religion or belief. We continue to call for Pastor Fathi Malayeri’s immediate and unconditional release, and for the release of all other prisoners of

conscience who are unjustly detained in Iran. We also continue to call on the Iranian government to ensure due process and to allow the country's religious minorities to enjoy freedom of religion or belief, as guaranteed under Iran's own constitution and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which it is party."