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## IRAN | Mohammadreza Omid released on bail

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) learned that Mohammadreza Omid (Youhan), a Church of Iran member who was arrested May 13 in Rasht, Iran, was released on bail.

Omid was arrested during a series of raids targeting the homes of church members by Iranian intelligence (VEVAK) officers who seized computers, mobile telephones and bibles. He was summoned to VEVAK offices by telephone prior to a raid on his home.

Along with Church of Iran members Yasser Mossayebzadeh and Saheb Fadaie, Omid was held in Lakan Prison near Rasht pending payment of around \$33,000 in bail. Mossayebzadeh and Fadaie were released May 28 and 29, respectively. Although Omid was the first to attempt to post bail, judges refused to accept his payment, stating that he had to remain in jail because VEVAK were bringing additional charges against him.

Omid was eventually released June 7. The authorities said nothing about the nature of the new charge but told Omid he would be "summoned again." To date, none of the men have been given reasons for their arrests, neither have they been informed of the charges they will be facing.

In other news, on June 6, Maryam (Nasim) Naghash Zargaran was allowed to return home from prison for medical treatment. Naghash Zargaran was jailed for four years in July 2013 for "propagating against the regime" and "collusion intended to harm national security." On May 30, she was taken to the hospital four days into a hunger strike for greater access to medical attention but was returned to prison soon afterward. According to the Iranian religious freedom organization, Article 18, family members who were allowed to see her briefly at that time had found her in a semi-conscious state.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "The release of Mr. Omid and the medical furlough granted to Ms. Naghash Zargaran are a mixed blessing. In both cases, these events are merely temporary improvements. Mr. Omid and his fellow church members have been

released following exorbitant bail payments and still face unknown charges, while Ms. Naghash Zargaran is likely to be returned to complete an unjust sentence once her condition improves. Clearly, Christians in Iran continue to be harassed judicially. We once again urge the international community to press Iran to uphold and protect the right to freedom of religion or belief, as articulated in its constitution and international treaties to which it is signatory. We also urge the international community to hold Iran to account for ensuring that all prisoners of conscience are able to access adequate medical care in a timely manner.”