

Iran: Christians face long prison sentences



Iranian Christians request prayer for Pastor Victor Bet Tamraz (pictured), Amin Afshar Naderi and Hadi Asgari, who face long prison sentences.

Following a hearing on 11th June Judge Ahmadzadeh issued his verdict on 3rd and 4th July. Pastor Victor was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, Amin to 15 years (possibly including time already served) and Hadi to 10 years. The three men were also sentenced to a 2-year travel ban. The judge also raised the amount of bail for Amin and Hadi to 270 million Tomans (approximately US\$80,000).

The men were not present at court when the sentences were read out, but their lawyer was present. Their lawyer will appeal against the court's decision this week.

Pastor Victor and Amin were among several Christians arrested on 26th December 2014 at a Christmas celebration at Pastor Victor's home in Tehran. Pastor Victor, who is of Assyrian background, was verbally charged with 'conducting evangelism?', 'illegal house church activities?' and other charges which amount to 'acting against national security?'. He was released on bail on 1st March 2015. Amin, a convert from Islam, was charged with 'acting against national security?' and 'insulting the sacred?' (blasphemy). Hadi, also a convert, was not present at the Christmas celebration but was arrested in August 2016 at a picnic in Firuzkuh and charged with 'acting against national security?' and 'organising and creating house churches?'.

Ramiel Bet Tamraz, Pastor Victor's son, who was also arrested in August 2016 in Firuzkuh, is awaiting a hearing. Ramiel was charged with 'acting against national security?' and 'organising and creating house churches?' as well as charges relating to his father's ministry. Pastor Victor's wife Shamiram Isavi Khabizeh was summoned by the authorities in June 2017 to Evin Detention Centre, Branch 3 of the Revolutionary Court, and charged with 'participating in foreign seminars?' and 'acting against Iranian national security?' as a church member. She was released after one day on bail of 100 million Tomans (approximately US\$30,000).

Ramiel and Shamiram's hearing has not yet been scheduled. It is highly likely that their case also will be handled by Judge Ahmadzadeh.

Source : MEC