

## Plight of Iranian Christians Ignored during Official Visit to Evin Prison



International Christian Concern (ICC) has learned that 11 Iranian Members of Parliament (MPs) visited Evin Prison in Tehran on January 30, claiming that they were investigating reports of abuse. Evin Prison has a notorious reputation, at times being called the regime's torture factory. The MPs were at the prison for only three hours, which included a visit to the infamous Ward 209. However, according to Radio Farda, the MPs only spoke to four detainees and the visit was heavily supervised by intelligence agents.

The abuse of Christians imprisoned in Evin has been well documented by those who have survived their incarceration. Many have passed through Ward 209, which is administered by the Intelligence Ministry and often referred to as a "prison within a prison."

World Watch Monitor recently shared a November interview with Maryam Rostampour, a Christian convert who was imprisoned in Evin for eight months. She said, "One day is like a year, some days you can't breathe because you don't know what's going to happen to you the next day...When people experience living in Evin Prison, they will never be the same again. The stress is too much. We can't be the same people. We can't be as happy as before. We don't enjoy activities like normal people because all the time we think of those who are still there."

A number of high-profile Christians have experienced imprisonment in Evin Prison. Their names include:

- Pastor Saeed Abedini was tortured during his imprisonment in Evin Prison and he reported witnessing the mistreatment of other prisoners of conscience. He was released in January 2016.
- Maryam Naghash Zargaran reported that during her incarceration at Evin Prison, she endured severe torture and was denied medical treatment for preexisting health conditions. Maryam was released in August 2017 after serving more than her sentence.
- Pastor Victor Bet-Tamraz reported weakness, breathing difficulties, weight loss, and a tooth infection following his conditional release from solitary confinement in Evin Prison in 2015. His judicial case is ongoing.
- In February 2017, Amin Afshar Naderi and Hadi Askari went on a hunger strike to demand medical care after being refused treatment for serious medical conditions. Hadi remains detained in Evin Prison; both men report intense pressure to convert back to Islam. Their judicial case is ongoing.

Claire Evans, ICC's Regional Manager, said, "The plight of Iranian Christians is truly quite dire. Iran's regime is built upon fear and suppression, both of which are fully evident in the notorious operations of Evin Prison. Orchestrated visits with restricted visibility does nothing to improve the human rights conditions in the prison; instead, it is an attempt to hide the truth of the prison's brutality. Imprisoned Christians in Evin survive through the worst of the prison's cruelty, their lives forever changed because of the

experience."

Source : Christian Headlines