

Christian leader sentenced to death in Iran for apostasy

Youcef Nadarkhani, a 33-year-old Christian leader from the city of Rasht in northern Iran, **has been sentenced to death by hanging for the crime of apostasy**.

Youcef has been in prison for over a year following his arrest for protesting against a government decision to teach Islam to all children including his two young sons who are aged eight and six. Some time after his arrest, the charges against him were changed from "protesting" to "apostasy and evangelism to Muslims".



During the past year, the Iranian authorities have used various methods to try to convert him back to Islam, including giving him pills, apparently in an attempt to claim that he was insane. On 21 September, Youcef was put on trial and verbally given the sentence of death. On 13 November, it was reported that the verdict had been confirmed in writing. Under Iranian law, there are 20 days in which to appeal the verdict and Youcef's lawyer has begun the appeal process.

(Present Truth Ministries)

Youcef's case was raised in Dublin on Thursday 11 November when a Church in Chains delegation met the newly-appointed Iranian Ambassador to Ireland, Mr Hossein Panahiazar.

PRAY... that God would grant Youcef peace and strength in this hour, that God would move on his behalf, and that he would be delivered from death. Pray also for his wife, Fatemah and sons.



Christian woman sentenced to death in Pakistan under "Blasphemy" Laws

Farm labourer **Asia Bibi**, from Punjab province, was sentenced to death for blasphemy on 8 November, the first woman to receive this sentence for blasphemy in Pakistan. Her lawyers have appealed the shocking verdict to a higher court. Since the verdict was announced, authorities have not permitted visits from Asia's husband, Ashiq Masih, or other family members. "**We don't know yet how she is, but we trust the Lord,**" he said. "**Asia is suffering for Jesus, and He will not forsake her.**" Ashiq said he did not have the heart to break the news to two of their children. "**I**

haven't told two of my younger daughters about the court's decision," he said. "**They asked me many times about their mother but I can't get the courage to tell them that the judge has sentenced their mother to capital punishment for a crime she never committed.**"

In June 2009, Asia was working when she was asked to fetch water. Some other (Muslim) labourers refused to drink as the water had been brought by a Christian and was therefore "unclean". A row about religion followed, and Asia refused to recant her faith. A few days later, she and her daughters were attacked by a mob of villagers and Muslim clerics. The police filed a case against Asia and imprisoned her. She has been held in solitary confinement ever since. *(Compass Direct, Release International, The Telegraph)*

PRAY... for God's protection and encouragement for Asia in prison and pray that her husband would be allowed to visit her soon. Pray also that her appeal would succeed quickly.

52 people killed in attack on church in Baghdad

On Sunday 31 October, gunmen wearing suicide vests and wielding automatic rifles besieged the Church of Our Lady of Salvation in Baghdad (pictured). The attackers entered the Chaldean Catholic church at dusk, during Mass. They shot a priest and herded the congregation into a hall, holding 120 people hostage for several hours.

A total of 52 people were killed and 67 injured, some by grenade, making this the worst massacre of Iraqi Christians since the war began in 2003.



At least 5 people were killed when a series of ten explosions targeted six Christian neighbourhoods across central Baghdad early on the morning of Wednesday 10 November. At least 500,000 Christians have already been driven out of Iraq by Islamist extremists since the war began in 2003.

(Associated Press, Assyrian International News Agency, Irish Times, New York Times, Reuters, World)

PRAY... that God would protect Iraqi Christians from further attack and pray that He would give Christian leaders wisdom and courage as they care for people in great distress.



40 Christians arrested in latest crackdown

At least 40 Christians have been arrested in the latest crackdown in southern Eritrea. Most of the detained belong to the Full Gospel Church, an evangelical church that was among those banned by the Eritrean government in May 2002.

The crackdown began on 20 October when Eritrean government officials arrested eleven Christians and took them to unknown locations, following an order given by Mustafa Nur Hussein,

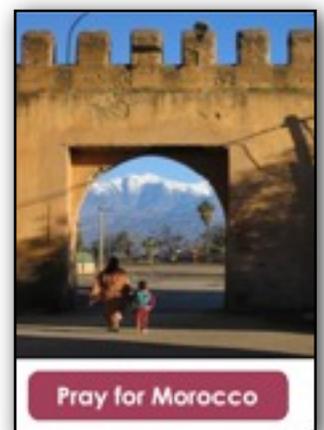
governor of the southern province of Eritrea. Security officials rounded up the Christians from the cities of Mendefera, Dekemhare and Dbarwa, and confiscated TVs, video players and other electronic equipment. One of the raids found a list of believers involved with the underground church in the area. Security forces are now using this list to hunt down every believer and their families. The current total of Christians in prison is believed to be over 2,200.

(International Christian Concern/Release Eritrea)

PRAY... that the Lord would strengthen and encourage all those who have been imprisoned and pray that they would be well treated. Pray again for an end to the persecution of Christians.

International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church marked all around Ireland

On Sunday 7 November, churches from Dublin to Mayo, Monaghan to Kilkenny, Enniskillen to Limerick and many other locations marked the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. The focus of prayer was on Morocco and churches used a short PowerPoint presentation supplied by *Church in Chains* together with a colourful Prayer Card to pray for the country, the rulers, Moroccan Christians and foreign Christians living in Morocco. The Winter issue of *Church in Chains* magazine (to be published in late November) will also focus on Morocco.



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