

Ambassador Alireza Yousefi
Embassy of Iran to Norway
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Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my concern about three Iranian converts to Christianity, Amin Khaki, Milad Goodarzi and Alireza Nourmohammadi, who have been convicted on account of their peaceful practice as converts to Christianity.

On 11 November 2020, Iranian intelligence agents raided the men's homes, threatened them, and confiscated various personal belongings related to Christianity, including Bibles and Christian literature. Following a hearing in Karaj Revolutionary Court in June 2021, the three men were each handed down the maximum five-year prison sentence under the recently amended Article 500 of the penal code for "propaganda that educates in a deviant way contrary to the holy religion of Islam." They were also fined 40 million tomans (approx. US\$1600).

I understand that the newly amended Article 500 seeks to punish individuals who pose security threats to the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, the men in question merely wish to practice their religion peacefully, without in any way compromising the love and respect they have for their country.

This case has already seen several positive developments: Following an appeal hearing on 25 August 2021, the sentences were reduced to three years and the fines cancelled, and on 16 December, there will be an additional hearing. However, their conviction and punishment remain a miscarriage of justice and I am hopeful that on the upcoming hearing, the court will acknowledge this and the men be acquitted of all charges.

Your Excellency, I am aware that Iran is a nation that deeply cares about its citizens and seeks to protect their rights. This is demonstrated through Iran being a signatory to the legally binding International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, with Article 18 stating the freedom for everyone to have, change and practice the religious belief of their choice. Thankfully, this also applies to Iran's vulnerable religious minorities, such as Christians. I, therefore, humbly petition your intervention to ensure that:

- all charges against Amin Khaki, Milad Goodarzi and Alireza Nourmohammadi are dropped immediately;
- Iranian authorities take the necessary steps to ensure that Article 500 of the penal code is not misused to target religious minorities;
- Iran respectfully honour its commitment to Article 18 in the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, protecting every citizen's right to freedom of religion or belief.

Sincerely,