

Ambassador Alireza Yousefi
Embassy of Iran to Norway
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Your Excellency,

I am writing to bring attention to Your Excellency's Government information concerning the reported persecution of members of the Christian minority in Iran, including converts from Islam, as well as the detention of dozens of Christians. Most of them have been convicted for exercising their right to observe and worship their religion freely.

In the past years, several churches have been forced to close by the government, which has led to Christians today having to observe and practice their faith discretely in family settings. A number of reports have described intimidating actions undertaken by the Ministry of Intelligence and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and human rights violations perpetrated by their officers against members of these religious communities, including house raids, frequent summons to police stations, intensive and abusive interrogations, arbitrary arrests and detentions, as well as judicial harassment on charges related to actions against national security and propaganda against the system, which may incur long prison sentences and hefty fines, as well as serious restrictions with regard to legal representation prior and during hearings.

Freedom of religion or belief is a universally recognized right, an intrinsic aspect of a person's integrity and humanity, which allows everyone to hold and practice their beliefs, individually and in community with others, in private or in public. Such a right exists independently of any administrative approval, and of any formal or informal recognition of places of worship. The use of ambiguously formulated terms such as "acting against national security" or "propaganda against the state" to systematically restrict the peaceful exercise of this right is contrary to Iran's obligations under international law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to which Iran is a party since 24 June 1975.

I therefore humbly petition your Excellency's intervention to ensure that:

- measures and policies are undertaken to prevent discrimination against persons belonging to the Christian minority, including converts from Islam, allowing them to fully enjoy their human rights, thereunder the right to freely assemble and practice their religion or belief in homes or public places without the fear of government intervention;
- measures are taken to ensure that terms such as "acting against national security" and "propaganda against the state" are not misused by national courts to target religious minority communities;
- all citizens of Iran, including Christians, are guaranteed the right to a fair trial and need not fear judicial harassment on the grounds of their conscience, religion or belief, neither in the form of imposition of lengthy prison sentences, hefty fines, work restriction, nor physical or psychological ill-treatment to forcibly extract confessions.

Sincerely,