



PRAY FOR PERSECUTED BROTHERS & SISTERS

Pray for the Persecuted Christians in IRAN

Remember the prisoners as if chained with them - those who are mistreated - since you yourselves are in the Body also.

(Hebrews 13:3)



Iran

Total Population: 83,992,949

Self-Proclaimed Christian Population: 0.5% – **Evangelical Witness: 0.1%**

Largest Religion: Muslim - 97%

A Church Surrounded, Defying the Odds

By Claire Evans

07/14/2022 Washington D.C. (International Christian Concern) - To the surprise of few, Iran is home to one of the most heavily persecuted Christian communities in the world. Led by the harsh hand of the Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iranian authorities continue to crack down on Christians throughout the country- adding to a history of persecution that dates back to the Iranian Revolution of 1979 that installed an Islamic theocracy replacing the U.S.-backed democratic order.

Surprisingly, Iran regularly claims that it respects religious freedom for Iranian Christians, pointing to the Assyrian and Armenian communities that have existed in the land since the early centuries of Christianity. These communities

have their own churches and can generally attend and worship without much government interference because they are not seen as a threat to the Ayatollah's rule.

What the Iranian government tries to hide is its persecution of Muslim background believers (MBBs), people who converted to Christianity from Islam. With this population of Christians growing within Iran, the government feels that its own authority is being threatened, as is the case in countries like China and North Korea.

In an effort to stop this spread of Christianity, the Iranian government employs several methods of persecution. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps is an elite military unit that works with the Ministry of Intelligence to identify Christian converts in society and monitor their activities. In particular, Iranian authorities commonly raid house churches, which the government deems as a threat to national security. Because the only churches recognized by the government worship in their traditional language, converts are left with nowhere to worship in their own language except these house churches. Iran also criminalizes evangelism and house church worship, landing many pastors and lay worshipers in Iran's prison system, notorious for its poor living conditions and torture of prisoners. Evin prison, one of the worst in the country where dozens of Christians have been held, had their abuse exposed last year when a vigilante group hacked their camera system and put their heinous crimes on display for the world to see the plight of Iran's religious minorities. It would be expected that under such pressure, the Iranian Church would shrink, and people would leave the faith. In actuality though, the Church has exploded there, and Islam is dying among the young.

In this issue, you will read about the unbearable trials Iran's Christians have endured for decades and the incredible stories of the underground church. Iranian Christians have persevered and are a witness to the world of the power of God's church under persecution.