

President Hassan Rouhani
Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Thunstrasse 68
Case postale 227
3006 Berne, Switzerland

03/24/2020

Dear President Hassan Rouhani,

We write to you asking you to free imprisoned pastor Youcef Nadarkhani who is being held in Evin Prison.

Pastor Nadarkhani is a member of the Iranian Church and the pastor of a 400-member house church. He first gained international attention in 2010 when the Iranian judiciary issued him a death sentence for apostasy, as he was a Muslim who converted to Christianity and he pushed for his sons to be recognized in the school system despite their Christian faith. Pastor Nadarkhani was acquitted in 2012, but re-arrested in May 2016 and sentenced in July 2017. His home was raided by 10 plainclothes intelligence officials in July 2018, who used excessive force on his teenage son. Since then, Pastor Nadarkhani has been incarcerated in Evin Prison on charges of forming a house church and promoting Zionist Christianity.

Judge Ahmadzadeh presided over Pastor Nadarkhani's 2016 case and is responsible for the verdict issued in 2017, which sentenced the pastor to 10 years in prison and two years in exile for violating national security. During his trial, Judge Ahmadzadeh allowed a non-presiding judge, Abolghasem Salavati, to repeatedly interrupt proceedings by hurling disparaging remarks about Christians.

Judge Ahmadzadeh not only violated Pastor Nadarkhani's basic right to a fair trial, but issued a sentence that violates Iran's international human rights obligations. He knowingly sent Pastor Nadarkhani to a prison with a well-known record of torture and inhumane conditions. Judge Ahmadzadeh also added an additional sentence of exile in order to cause severe mental suffering by further isolating Pastor Nadarkhani from both his family and faith community.

Last fall, Pastor Nadarkhani conducted a 21-day hunger strike in protest of the way the government was discriminating against his children's education. Fifteen-year-old Youeil was barred from school and 17-year-old Daniel was only re-admitted into school as a guest. Both had been denied certificates showing that they had completed the past two academic years because they refused to take Islamic classes. The last reported information was that the authorities promised to look into the matter, which is what prompted Pastor Nadarkhani to end his hunger strike.

We respectfully ask that you release Pastor Nadarkhani and commute his remaining sentence. Additionally, we ask that you investigate the human rights violations committed by Judge Ahmadzadeh in this case and others, and consider the US's role in the matter, whether by sanctioning Judge Ahmadzadeh personally or through other means.

Sincerely,

International Christian Concern