

September 10, 2018

Ayatollah Sadeghi Larijani  
Head of the Judiciary  
c/o Public Relations Office  
Number 4, Dead end of 1 Azizi  
Above Pasteur Intersection  
Vali Asr Street  
Tehran, Iran

Dear Ayatollah Larijani:

I write on behalf of the Assyrian Policy Institute in advance of the verdict of the appeal court in the trials of Iranian Assyrians Victor Bet-Tamraz and Shamiran Isaavi, as well as Iranian Christians Hadi Asgari and Amin Afshar-Naderi, due to be issued later this year in October 2018.

As you are aware, the above-named individuals are currently facing a combined sentence of 45 years in prison for activities related to the practice of their Christian faith. A review of the charges filed against these individuals makes it evident that Iran is attempting to equate the peaceful practice of Christianity with “gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security.”

The recent actions of the Iranian government against the Christian community in Iran violate the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which guarantees the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion and states that persons belonging to religious minorities “shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.”

High profile NGOs have called for an end to the targeting of Christians in Iran, including Amnesty International, which stated with regard to these four individuals, “If imprisoned, they would be prisoners of conscience.” If the current wave of implicating practicing Christians goes unchecked, the effects will be devastating for the minoritized community.

Therefore, we urge you to:

- Annul the convictions and sentences of Victor Bet-Tamraz, Shamiran Issavi, Amin Afshar-Naderi, and Hadi Asgari, as they have been targeted solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedoms of religion and belief, expression, and association, through their Christian faith;
- Stop the harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention, and imprisonment of Christians, including converts, in Iran;
- Respect the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including the freedom to have or to adopt or change a religion or belief of one’s choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest one’s religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching, as guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party.

Signed,



Jon Koriel  
Chairman

CC: Mahmoud Abbasi, Deputy for Human Rights and International Affairs, Ministry of Justice