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## IRAN | Pastor Arrested, Bibles Confiscated

CSW has learned that Matthias Haghnejad, a pastor from the Church of Iran denomination, was arrested in the city of Rasht after a church service on Feb. 10.

According to CSW sources, Islamic Revolutionary Guard members entered the church where the service was being held just after it had concluded and arrested Pastor Haghnejad. They confiscated bibles and mobile phones belonging to the attendees. They also went to the pastor's home where they confiscated his books and his wife's phone.

Sources added that Pastor Haghnejad, who appeared to have been expecting the arrest, encouraged the congregation as he was being led away by the security agents. Since 2006, Pastor Haghnejad has been arrested and tried on several occasions in Rasht, Shiraz and Karaj.

Two other Christians named Hossein Kadivar (Elisha) and Khalil Dehghanpour were arrested in Rasht on Jan. 29. They were expected to face trial Feb. 12, but the hearing was postponed.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We urge the Government of Iran to end the harassment of the Christian community. The arrests of Pastor Haghnejad, Hossein Kadivar and Khalil Dehghanpour are part of a worrying escalation in the ongoing official campaign against Christians. The fact that Iran continues to commit flagrant human rights violations while simultaneously seeking improved relations with other countries should be a matter of utmost concern. We call for the unconditional release of these men and for the Iranian authorities to uphold the right of all religious minorities to freedom of religion and belief, as articulated in Article 18 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which the nation is party."