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IRAN: Iranian churches get behind #Place2Worship campaign

Iranian churches get behind #Place2Worship campaign

Article 18 (14.01.2022) – <https://bit.ly/3qFaloA> – Iranian-speaking churches in the diaspora have added their voice to the call for Persian-speaking Christians to be given a place to worship.

The #Place2Worship campaign was launched late last year in response to a question from three Christian prisoners of

conscience, who asked where they might worship once they were released, having been imprisoned for gathering together in house-churches because converts to Christianity are not permitted to attend the churches of Iran's recognised Christian minority of ethnic Armenians and Assyrians.

This campaign has been supported by numerous former prisoners of conscience, and now has the support of 33 churches from 10 different countries – the UK, USA, Canada, Turkey, Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, Austria, Norway, and Georgia.

Their joint statement, and the list of signatories, can be read below:

Statement by Iranian churches in support of the #Place2Worship campaign

We, the leaders of Persian-speaking churches outside Iran, in unison with imprisoned Christians, have a simple question for the authorities of the Islamic Republic: "Where can a Persian-speaking Christian worship?" and not risk imprisonment.

We also join Article18 in noting that Persian-speaking Christians are not only deprived of a church but are also arrested by security agents when they gather in their homes to pray and read the Bible. So not only have these citizens been deprived of their freedom of thought, religion and community, but they and their families are not even safe at home.

The Iranian government has not stopped at closing churches; it has even turned the worship of Christian converts into a security issue, by confiscating their Bibles and sentences these citizens to long prison terms.

In the last four decades, Persian-speaking churches have been closed and many imprisoned Christian leaders have been forced to flee, and some have even been killed.

Deprivation of a church is the tip of the iceberg of

structural discrimination and systematic repression against Persian-speaking Christians.

The government does not recognise the Persian-speaking Christian minority, depriving them of their basic human rights and rights as citizens. In the view of the Islamic Republic, the hundreds of thousands of Christian converts have no formal existence and are nothing more than ghosts.

So standing together with the #Place2Worship campaign, we call on the Iranian government to stop persecuting Persian-speaking Christians, to recognise the human rights and citizenship rights of this minority, and to allow them to have a church.

We note that according to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a signatory, "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching."

We also call on all Iranians to stand by Christian citizens in this campaign and not to leave them alone in their campaign for freedom of belief.

Iranian Church, San Jose, California, USA

New Life Church, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Naviderahaie, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Eternal Life, Cologne, Germany

Anchor of Hope, Tbilisi, Georgia

Crown Church, Essen, Germany

Word of Love, Eindhoven, Netherlands

Ambassadors of Christ Church, California, USA

Church on the Rock, Toronto, Canada

Emmanuel Iranian Church, Québec, Canada

The Spirit of God Church, Bremen, Germany

Zwolle and Apeldoorn 222 Church, Germany
Yalova Iranian Church, Turkey
Assemblies of God Church, Denizli, Turkey
Almere 222 Church, Almere, Netherlands
The International Church of the Cross, Oslo, Norway
Richmond Hill Iranian Church, Canada
Iranian Christian Fellowship (Chiswick), London, UK
North London Iranian Church, London, UK
Croydon Iranian Church, London, UK
East London Iranian Church, UK
Armenian Christian Fellowship, London, UK
St Aphrahat Iranian Church, Manchester, UK
Liverpool Iranian Church, UK
Brighton Iranian Church, UK
Glasgow Iranian Church, UK
Iranian Christian Church, Stuttgart, Germany
New Life Church, Oslo, Norway
Iranian Church of Gothenburg, Sweden
Hamgaam Iranian Church of Vienna, Austria
Linz Iranian Church, Austria
Hamgaam Iranian Church of Linz, Austria
Disciples Church, Toronto, Canada

Photo : St Luke's Anglican Church in Isfahan, one of just four Persian-speaking churches still permitted to operate inside Iran, but not allowed to take on new members. Article 18

[Further reading about FORB in Iran on HRWF website](#)

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