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## **IRAN: Monthly newsletter about Baha'is and Christians in Iran in August**

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**Baha'is**

**One-year sentences confirmed for Ataa-ollah Zaffar and Abbaas Taa'ef in Tehran**

The Review Court for Tehran Province has upheld the one-year sentences of **Mr. Ataa-ollah Zaffar** and **`Abbaas Taa'ef**. They were both arrested on September 27, 2019, following home raids by agents from the Ministry of Intelligence. They were charged with undermining national security by leading and participating in the Baha'i sect. It appears that the home raids, in Tehran and Karaj, related to Baha'i burials in Tehran, where Mr. Zaffar was involved with a Baha'i cemetery. Mr. Taa'ef was freed on bail on November 25, 2019; I do not know when Mr. Zaffar was bailed.

The Review Court judge was Seyyed Ahmad Zargar, with Counsellor `Abbas`Ali Houzaan. The verdict was dated July 6.

### **Ali Ahmadi begins prison term in Qaemshahr**

Hrana/ Sens Daily (29.08.2021) – <https://cutt.ly/vWQWe8j> - On August 26, **`Ali Ahmadi** was arrested and transferred to Qaemshahr Prison to serve a one-year sentence. He was arrested on November 20, 2018, by agents who insulted his religious beliefs and calling him "unclean" and "Bahai dog." They also seized some religious books, mobile phone and computer. He was freed on bail on January 2, 2019, after posting bail of 150 million tumans (31,000 euros ; \$US 35,000). He was sentenced to 11 years of prison for "spreading propaganda against the state and managing a Baha'i organization." The Review Court for Mazandaran Province reduced this to one year of prison.

He has been arrested several times in the past decade or so. On the first occasion he was sentenced to 10 months in prison, and on the second occasion he was acquitted. In 2011 he was arrested with two others and charged with participation in Baha'i activities. He suffers from diabetes, heart problems, and thyroid illnesses.

## **Dorsa Dehqaani free on bail**

Hrana/ Sens Daily (08.08.2021) – <https://cutt.ly/RWQWQz6> – **Dorsa Dehqaani** who was arrested at Shiraz railway station on June 14, was released on bail on July 1. In 2014, when she was 19 years and had just been barred from tertiary education because of her Baha'i beliefs, Miss Dehqaani wrote a letter to Saadeq Laarijaani, who was at that time the head of the Judiciary in Iran, protesting against the discrimination and oppression suffered by the Baha'is in Iran.

## **Saanaaz Notqi sentenced in Ahvaz**

Hrana / Sens Daily (02.08.2021) – <https://cutt.ly/ZWQWG1T> – **Saanaaz Notqi**, a Baha'i from Ahvaz, has been sentenced to five years in prison by a revolutionary court there. Her arrest and detention were not previously reported on Sen's Daily. The 5-year sentence relates to the charge of "membership of the illegal Bahai organisation." She also received a concurrent 8-month sentence for "propaganda against the regime." The trial was held on July 17, 2021. I do not know the date of her arrest, or further details.

## **Christians**

### **Christian convert given leave from prison**

Article 18 (27.08.2021) – Christian convert **Hamed Ashouri** has been released on leave from prison.

Article18 understands that the 31-year-old, who is serving a 10-month sentence for "propaganda against the Islamic Republic", may be permitted to spend the rest of his sentence at home, with an electronic tag.

At least two other Christian converts have been released with

electronic tags so far this year, in what appears to be an increasing trend.

He was arrested by Ministry of Intelligence agents as he left his home in Fardis on the morning of 23 February 2019.

He was then taken to Rajaei Shahr Prison in Karaj, where he was held in solitary confinement for 10 days, before being transferred to Ghezel Hesar Prison, also in Karaj, for another two days.

During interrogations, Hamed was offered a large monthly salary if he “cooperated” by becoming an informant against other Christians.

When he refused, he was beaten.

Hamed was finally released on bail after submitting guarantees in the form of payslips.

The case against him was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic, but Hamed was eventually sentenced in April 2021 following a court hearing a month earlier at the 4th Branch of the Revolutionary Court in Karaj.

He was summoned to begin his prison sentence after the failure of his appeal on 26 June.

Hamed was initially told to submit himself to prison within 10 days of his failed appeal, but he was later given a few weeks longer.

### **Christian converts' sentences reduced but appeals rejected**

Article 18 (27.08.2021) – Three Christian converts were informed today that their appeals against five-year prison sentences have been rejected, but their sentences reduced to three years.

**Amin Khaki, Milad Goodarzi and Alireza Nourmohammadi** were given the maximum five-year prison sentences in June for “engaging in propaganda that educates in a deviant way contrary to the holy religion of Islam”. They were also each fined 40 million tomans (\$1,800).

They were the first Christians convicted under controversial new amendments to Article 500 of the penal code, which came into force earlier this year.

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### **Intelligence agents ‘refusing to return Christians’ property’**

Article 18 (26.07.2021) – Intelligence agents in the southwestern city of Dezful are reportedly refusing to hand back the personal belongings of four Christian converts recently charged with “propaganda against the Islamic Republic”, despite being ordered to do so by the court.

The lawyer for the four men, Iman Soleimani, told Mohabat News that the Christians cannot afford to purchase replacement items, and that several of the items, such as phones and computers, are “urgently needed” for their children ahead of the new academic year.

The four Christians – **Esmaeil Narimanpour, Alireza Varak-Shah, Mohammad Ali (Davoud) Torabi, and Mohammad Kayidgap** – were charged on 3 August at the 4th branch of the prosecutor’s office of the Civil and Revolutionary Court of Dezful.

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### **‘If you won’t recant your faith, you’re no longer my sister!’**

Article 18 (13.08.21) – When **Arina’s** brother came to visit her

in prison, he told her that if she refused to give up her Christian faith, he would no longer consider her his sister.

Like her interrogators before him, Arina's brother told her she had been "deceived" into converting to Christianity and said he felt guilty for not supporting her enough through her divorce.

Arina replied: "I have been a Christian for three years now, and I am active in the church. My faith isn't an emotional reaction to what I've been through. I have come to faith as a result of personal research, and I'm not willing to give it up."

Arina, whose full name is **Fatemeh Zarei**, was one of half a dozen Christian women arrested during a raid on a house-church leader's meeting in Shahinshahr, near Isfahan, in February 2013.

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### **Christian convert fitted with electronic tag**

Article 18 (09.08.21) – Christian convert **Reza Zaeemi** was yesterday released from prison, on the condition he wears an electronic tag for the remainder of his nine-month sentence.

He is also banned from leaving the country for two years following the completion of his sentence.

Reza has spent 80 days in detention overall, including just over two months in Karaj's Central Prison since starting his sentence there on 2 June.

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## **Four more Christian converts charged with ‘propaganda against the Islamic Republic’**

Article 18 (04.08.21) – Four Christian converts from the south-western city of Dezful are the latest Iranian Christians to be officially charged with “propaganda against the Islamic Republic”.

The charge was read out to **Esmaeil Narimanpour, Alireza Varak-Shah, Mohammad Ali (Davoud) Torabi, and Mohammad Kayidgap** at the 4th branch of the prosecutor’s office of the Civil and Revolutionary Court of Dezful yesterday.

Meanwhile, the lawyer for the four men, Iman Soleimani, told Article18 that while the other four Christians who are part of the same case – Hojjat Lotfi Khalaf, Alireza Roshanaei Zadeh, and Mohsen Saadati Zadeh – have not yet been officially charged, he has “no doubt” that they too will be summoned to the next Revolutionary Court hearing.

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