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# **IRAN : Special monthly digest: News about Baha'is and Christians in October**

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## **Christians**

### **Iran punishes Christians with harsh prison sentences**

Evangelical focus (19.10.2022) – When authorities in Iran summoned a Christian couple in Tehran on August 13, the house-church members supposed it concerned the return of

their confiscated belongings.

Instead, **Homayoun Zhaveh** and his wife **Sara Ahmadi** were detained in Tehran's Evin Prison, notorious for its harsh treatment of people deemed political enemies of the state, rights organizations say.

"Friends are concerned about their well-being, especially as Homayoun suffers from advanced Parkinson's disease", Christian Solidarity International (CSI) said in an October 6 statement, citing information from Middle East Concern.

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### **Iranian Christians join protests over woman's beating death: Reports**

Washingtontimes.com – Five weeks of street protests in Iran have attracted and emboldened the Islamic republic's Christian minority, human rights advocates said Thursday.

More than 300 Iranian Christians took the unusual step of releasing a public letter protesting the regime as a "bloodthirsty infection" on the nation, Lela Gilbert, senior fellow for international religious freedom at the Family Research Council, told a webinar sponsored by the group Save the Persecuted Christians.

Ms. Gilbert said Christian believers are stepping forward to join protests over the treatment of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish-Iranian woman, who died last month in the custody of Iran's "morality police" after being detained for reportedly wearing the mandatory headscarf incorrectly in public.

Ms. Gilbert said the protest letter "is the first time the Christian community, not just women, men and women, has made a statement against the regime."

She estimates that “at least a million Christians” in Iran have converted from Islam, although others believe the number is far greater.

### **Iran: Christian convert ██████████ released from prison**

Middle East Concern (18.10.2022) – Iranian Christians are rejoicing that **Naser Navard** Goltapeh was released from Evin Prison on 17 October after being pardoned by the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamanei.

The Iranian pastor was arrested along with three Azerbaijani Christians in June 2016. In June 2017, they were each sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment for “acting against national security through forming and establishing illegal house churches.” The Azerbaijanis had left Iran during the process, forfeiting bail.

Naser was taken to Evin prison in January 2018 after his conviction and sentence were upheld by the appeal court.

Naser repeatedly requested leave and early release which was consistently denied. His release now as part of the pardon of several people, came as a surprise.

There has been concern for the Christians detained in Evin during the recent fire and reported shots and explosions (state media reports eight prisoners were killed). It has been a relief that most Christians have been able to contact family and assure them that they are okay

### **Baha’is**

**The 2022 Award of a Spanish Association went to the Iranian**

## **Baha'i Institute for Higher Education**

Iran Press Watch (31.10.2022) – Reports indicate that the 2022 prize of the Spanish “Liberpress” association went to the Iranian Baha'i Institute for Higher Education.

The Liberpress Association has said that the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education (BIHE) deserves the 2022 award for its “laudable efforts in providing higher education to thousands of Baha'i youth deprived of education in their homeland.”

The 2022 Liberpress Prize has been awarded jointly to the Bahai Institute for Higher Education and Kianoush Ramezani, a human rights cartoonist.

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## **Arrest of a Baha'i Couple in Kerman**

Iran Press Watch (28.10.2022) – **Shagaig Bahrami and Shayan Gholami**, a Baha'i couple living in Kerman, were arrested by the security forces on Monday, October 24, and taken to the city's intelligence department. The security forces searched the houses of these citizens at the time of their arrest.

An informed source about the situation of these citizens told Harana: “After the arrest, this Baha'i couple was transferred to the detention center of the Kerman Intelligence Department. The follow-up of the families regarding the situation of these citizens has been unsuccessful so far.”

During the arrest, while searching the house, the officers seized some of the personal belongings of these citizens and took them with them.

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## **Milad Sanai, Baha'i citizen, arrested in Sari**

Iran Press Watch (28.10.22) – According to Harana news agency, the news organ of the group of human rights activists in Iran, on Tuesday, October 25, 2022, **Milad Sanai**, a Baha'i citizen, was arrested in Sari.

An informed source told Harana: “Sari intelligence agents arrested Mr. Sanai outside his house. They then performed an inspection of his home, during which they confiscated Mr. Sanai's mobile phone and laptop. According to some knowledgeable sources, security officers cited protest activity in cyberspace as the reason for his arrest.

To-date there is no information about the whereabouts of this citizen.

Milad Sanai, 34 years old, is a photographer, videographer and a resident of Sari city.

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## **Baha'i Individual Leili Karami Arrested in Shiraz**

Iran Press Watch (27.10.2022) – On October 26, 2022, security forces arrested Baha'i citizen **Leily Karami** at her house in Shiraz and transferred her to a detention facility known as House No 100. The agents searched her home and confiscated some of her personal belongings.

According to HRANA, the news agency of Human Rights Activists, Baha'i citizen Leily Karami was arrested at her house in Shiraz.

The reason for her arrest and the charge is still unknown.

## **Baha'is arrested for instigating "sedition" and protests**

Iran Press Watch (18.10.2022) – The Baha'i faith, one of the world's youngest religions, was founded in Iran in the nineteenth century, but its followers have long faced persecution in the country, especially since the establishment of the Islamic Republic. Dozens have been arrested, imprisoned and attacked. As recently as July, several preschool teachers were detained in a series of raids by intelligence officers. They were accused of being spies.

"Iran's government has for more than 40 years alleged that Bahá'ís are spies for foreign countries but, in all that time, has failed to produce a shred of credible evidence," said Diane Ala'i, representative of the Baha'i International Community to the United Nations. "Now they are reduced to attacking kindergarten and daycare teachers as a threat to national security."

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## **Iran intensified crackdown against Baha'i religious minority**

Iran Press Watch (17.10.22) – Iranian officials have intensified a crackdown against members of the Baha'i minority amid ongoing unrest across Iran.

According to the information received by IranWire, **Badie Khazei**, 31, a Baha'i citizen, was stopped by intelligence agents when he and some of his friends were out for dinner in Tehran.

Authorities in Fashafuye prison separated him from other prisoners and transferred him to Evin prison after learning about Badie Khadei's religious beliefs.

Iranian officials have arrested at least five members of the Baha'i minority over the recent days.

The Baha'i minority in Iran is among the parts of the Iranian society that have been in the spotlight of government pressures and confrontations since the beginning of the Islamic system in Iran.

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### **The Arrest of Saman Khadem, Baha'i citizen and environmental activist in Shiraz**

Iran Press Watch (15.10.2022) – According to a report received by Iran Wire, on the morning of Thursday 13 October 2022, 9 armed agents raided the home of **Saman Khadem**, a Baha'i citizen living in Shiraz. After searching the place and confiscating some of his and his daughter's personal belongings, including a laptop and a mobile phone, the officers arrested Saman Khadem and transferred him to an unknown place.

It should be mentioned that Saman Khadem has been active in the field of photography and environment.

Simultaneously with nationwide protests in Iran, many Baha'is have been arrested in different cities of Iran.

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### **Baha'is citizen Aida Rasti arrested 13 days after release from prison**

Iran Press Watch (12.10.2022) – On September 28, 2022, security forces arrested Baha'is citizen **Aida Rasti** at her house and took her to Ward 209 of Evin Prison. During the arrest, the agents searched her home and confiscated some of her personal belongings.

According to HRANA, the news agency of Human Rights Activists,

on September 28, 2022, Baha'is citizen Aida Rasti was arrested by security forces.

An informed source close to her family told HRANA that she was arrested again just 13 days after release from prison. According to this source, Rasti has been denied access to her lawyer and family visitation. The judicial and prison officials have unanswered her family's frequent enquire.

The reason for this arrest and the charges are still unknown.

### **Baha'is citizen Enayatollah Naeimi arrested**

Iran Press Watch (03.10.2022) – Last Wednesday, September 28, security forces arrested Baha'is citizen **Enayatollah Naeimi** in Isfahan. The agents searched his house, workplace and garden in the Isfahan suburbs. Enayatollah is a brother of Afif Neimi who was a member of a now-disbanded Baha'i group known as the "Yaran e Iran" or "Friends of Iran," which addressed the spiritual and social needs of the Baha'i community.

According to HRANA, the news agency of Human Rights Activists, on September 28, 2022, the intelligence agents arrested Baha'is citizen Enayatollah Naeimi in Isfahan.

An informed source told HRANA that Naeimi underwent surgery last year and is now in poor health condition, making him hard to endure jail.

On July 31, 2022, three other members of the "Yaran e Iran" Afif Naeimi, Mahvash Sabet and Fariba Kamal Abadi were arrested.

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