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IRAN: Special monthly: News about Baha'is and Christians in Iran in February

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Baha'is

One year imprisonment against Baha'i citizen Shiva Khalili upheld on appeal

Iran Press Watch (24.02.2022) – Recently, the Court of Appeal

of Mazandaran Province upheld the initial verdict of one year in prison against Baha'i citizen Shiva Khalili. Moreover, in this verdict, her cell phone, which they ruled has been used as a "crime tool", will be confiscated.

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Saba Sefidi free on bail

Hrana / Sens Daily (23.02.2022) – <https://cutt.ly/WAw4V0d> – Saba Sefidi, a Baha'i from Tehran, was freed on bail from Evin Prison on February 23. Bail was set at 1.5 billion tumans (315,000 euros ; \$US355,000). She was summoned to the court at Evin Prison on January 11, and arrested when she appeared there. Since then, she has had only brief contact with her family. There is no indication of the reason for her arrest and detention.

Naatoli Derakhshaan free on bail

Hrana / Sens Daily (09.02.2022) – <https://cutt.ly/nAw7bNR> – Naatoli Derakhshaan, a Baha'i poet, has been released on bail pending his trial. The Public Prosecutor has claimed that he was arrested in relation to membership of a pyramid selling scheme. He was previously arrested by agents of the Ministry of Intelligence on February 21, 2012, and released on bail of 200 million rials (13,000 euros, \$US18,000) on March 27 that year. The charge against him was said to be "propaganda against the regime." He had published an open letter to Ayatollah Khamenei, drawing attention to human rights violations against the Baha'is and others in Iran, the exclusion of Baha'i youth from tertiary education, and the false denials of these facts by Iran's representatives at the United Nations. Mr. Derakhshaan himself is excluded from tertiary education because he is a Baha'i.

Four Baha'i citizens still in detention and awaiting legal process

Iran Press Watch (8.02.2022) Four Baha'i citizens, Natoli Derakhshan, Saba Sefidi, Pari Kargarian Marvasti and Daniel Bani-Nejad, are still in detention and awaiting further legal proceedings. On January 11, Derakhshan and Sefidi were arrested in Sari and Tehran cities, respectively. Marvasti and Bani-Nejad were also arrested last week in Marlik District, located in Tehran Province.

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Arrests of Baha'i citizens in Marlik, Tehran

Iran Press Watch (07.02.2022) – Pari Kargarian Marousti, Daniel Bani Nejad, both Baha'i citizens, along with another citizen, were detained by security forces, while they were together at Ms. Kargarian's home in Marlik, Tehran. They were taken to an unknown location. Security forces raided the home of Ms. Kargarian and confiscated personal belongings, including mobile phones, electronics, pictures, books and works related to the Baha'i faith.

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Sina Shahri bailed in Tabriz

Hrana / Sens Daily (03.02.2022) – <https://cutt.ly/5Aw5ugD> – On February 2, Sina Shahri was released on bail in Tabriz, pending his trial. He was arrested on January 17 when agents from the Ministry of Intelligence raided his home, confiscating a number of personal effects relating to the Baha'i Faith, and arresting him. He later told his family by telephone that he was detained in a Ministry of Intelligence detention centre. On January 22, his wife Negaar Nasiri was summoned to the Ministry of Intelligence facility in Tabriz known as "Room 37" and questioned for some hours before her release.

Christians

Case closed: Christians' house-church worship was not 'action against national security'

Article 18 (28.02.2022) – Nine Christian converts who spent a combined nearly 20 years in prison for "acting against national security" and "promoting Zionist Christianity" have been acquitted by a Tehran appeal court.

The ruling by Branch 34 of the Tehran Court of Appeal, issued and communicated to the nine Christians today, comes after a Supreme Court judge ordered a review of their convictions in November.

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Iran's Vatican embassy angry at claim Catholic archbishop and nun denied visas

Article 18 (24.02.2022) – The Iranian embassy to the Holy See has reacted angrily to an article on a Catholic website highlighting the challenges faced by Christians in Iran.

In the article, published by AsiaNews on 16 February, Chaldean bishop Thomas Meram of Urmia explained the "many difficulties" faced by the Catholic community in Iran, while it was also

noted how the new Catholic archbishop, Fr Dominique Mathieu, had not been able to enter Iran despite his appointment by the Pope early last year, and how a long-serving Italian nun, 75-year-old Sister Giuseppina Berti, was also denied a renewal of her visa.

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'We are just Christians worshipping according to the Bible,' say converts in last defence

Article 18 (16.02.2022) – Three Christian converts facing up to 10 years in prison for alleged “deviant propaganda” and ties with foreign organisations have denied all the charges against them and said they are “just Christians worshipping according to the Bible”.

Ahmad Sarparast, Morteza Mashoodkari, and Ayoob Poor-Rezazadeh, who were giving their last defence this morning at Branch 2 of the Revolutionary Court of Rasht, in northern Iran, added that they “have not engaged in any propaganda against the regime or any action against national security”.

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Christian converts absolved by Supreme Court now face 'propaganda' charges

Two of the nine Christian converts cleared by a Supreme Court judge of “acting against national security” have now been charged with “propaganda against the state”.

Just six weeks after they were released from prison pending a review of their five-year sentences, Behnam Akhlaghi and Babak Hosseinzadeh were summoned last week to see a Tehran prosecutor, who on Saturday told them to return today with pay slips so they could be officially charged and released on bail.

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Converts summoned to begin prison sentences for 'spreading "Zionist" Christianity'

Article 18 (09.02.2022) – Three Christian converts from the northern city of Rasht have been summoned to begin serving prison sentences of between two and five years for “acting against national security” by attending a house-church and “spreading 'Zionist' Christianity”.

Ramin Hassanpour, his wife Saeede, and another woman, Sakine (Mehri) Behjati, have until the end of February to hand themselves in to Branch 1 of the Office for the Execution of

Judgments in Tehran's 33rd district.

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UN rapporteur highlights Iran's arrest of Christians 'for practice of beliefs'

Article 18 (10.02.2022) – The UN's special rapporteur on human rights in Iran has reiterated his "concern" at the regime's "continued repression of religious minorities", including arresting Christians "for the practice of their beliefs".

In his latest report, released ahead of the 49th session of the UN Human Rights Council later this month, Javaid Rehman specifically references the arrest of at least 53 Christians between 1 January and 1 December last year "for the practice of their religious beliefs".

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