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IRAN: Article 18 Annual Report 2023 on persecution of Christians

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Article 18 (26.03.2023) – Article18 today releases its fifth joint annual report on “Rights Violations against Christians in Iran”, with partner organisations CSW, Middle East Concern, and Open Doors International.

The 25-page report is released on 19 February to coincide with the 44th anniversary of the murder of Rev Arastoo Sayyah, the

first Christian killed for their faith in the Islamic Republic of Iran – just eight days after its inception.

And while it is no longer common for Iranian Christians to be killed for their faith, the report shows clearly that, contrary to the claims of the Islamic Republic, there is still no religious freedom in Iran today.

Instead, religious minorities including Christians – both the “recognised” Christians of Armenian and Assyrian descent, and unrecognised converts – are systematically deprived of their right to freely practise a faith of their choosing, in violation of Iran’s obligations as a signatory of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

In the year of the death of Mahsa Amini, when Iranians poured onto the streets to demand justice, the joint report argues that, “at their core, the ongoing protests are a cry for freedom: the freedom of the Iranian people to live in a way that corresponds with their beliefs”.

And while the Iranian regime has consistently sought to play down the uprising – including by using Armenian and Assyrian leaders as their mouthpieces – both Armenian and Assyrian Christians, as well as converts, have been among those arrested for participating.

Aside from the protests, 2022 was another year in which Christians continued to face harassment, arrest and imprisonment only due to the peaceful practice of their faith.

At least 30 Christians endured imprisonment or exile in 2022 – the same number as 2021 – while there were more than double the number of arrests: 134 in 2022 compared to 59 in 2021.

There was also a marked increase in the number of Christians detained – 61 in 2022, compared to 34 in 2021.

At the end of 2022, at least 17 Christians remained in prison,

serving sentences of up to 10 years on charges such as “acting against national security” and “propaganda against the regime”.

For, as the report outlines, to practise a belief other than Shia Islam in the Islamic Republic of Iran is “considered a threat to the Islamic Republic and its values”.

This is why, for example, two Iranian-Armenian Christians were sentenced in 2022 to 10 years in prison for holding church services in their homes.

Or why a 64-year-old convert to Christianity with advanced Parkinson’s disease, and his wife, are now serving a combined 10 years in prison.

These examples, and many more, are detailed in the report, a copy of which can be downloaded [here](#).

Photo: articleeighteen.com

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

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