



OPEN DOORS USA

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BULLETIN

Maryam And Marzieh Released Today!

Two Iranian Christian Women Freed After 259 Days in Prison; Still Need Our Prayers

SANTA ANA, Calif. (Nov. 18, 2009) – It is with great joy that Open Doors confirms the release of Maryam Rostampour, 27, and Marzieh Amirizadeh, 30, today. For almost nine months the two Iranian Christian women have been held in the notorious Evin prison in Tehran for refusing to deny their faith.

One of Open Doors field workers shares: “I am glad to let you know that Maryam and Marzieh are now set free without bail and they are currently at home.”

Although the release is great news for Maryam and Marzieh, it is not known if the release is unconditional.

In recent releases of detained Christians, Open Doors notes that it seems almost common practice by the Iranian authorities to indicate that there will be court hearings in the future or that former prisoners had to sign restrictive documents. The procedure then could take months up to several years before any action is undertaken.

“Praise the Lord for the great news out of Iran today of the release of Maryam and Marzieh,” said Open Doors USA President/CEO Dr. Carl Moeller. “Literally millions of Christians around the world have been praying for their release.

“Their future still is uncertain. So we must keep these two brave women in our prayers...and all the Christians who are imprisoned in Iran and in other countries.”

In recent years Evin prison has drawn criticism by various human rights organizations for violations of basic human rights and capital punishments that are carried out in the detention center. As far as known now, Maryam and Marzieh did not face direct physical torture while being detained, but have suffered from the lack of proper health care.

Their physical condition has deteriorated over time. No medical attention was given when suffering from infections, high fever and stomach aches. Marzieh was in pain because of an ongoing problem with her spine, an infected tooth only treated by painkillers, and severe headaches.

Both women were arrested March 5 by Iranian authorities without filing official charges against them. Only after a month of detention the accusations of “taking part in illegal gatherings” and “acting against state security” were made known to them.

On August 9 they had to appear in court and firmly responded to the warning that they should recant their Christian faith. “We love Jesus” is what they responded to the question if they were Christians. When the question was repeated they said; “yes, we are Christians.” They responded: “We will not deny our faith” to the emphatically statement by the deputy prosecutor that they should renounce their faith in both verbal and written form.

On October 7 Maryam and Marzieh were unexpectedly taken to appear before the court. There they learned three charges were put against them: Anti-state activities, propagation of the Christian faith, and apostasy. A new judge was presiding, and unlike the previous judges, he was sympathetic. He acquitted Maryam and Marzieh from the charge of anti-state activities, which rarely happens. As a result, their case was transferred from the revolutionary court to the civil court.

Open Doors is urging supporters to keep praying for Maryam and Marzieh since their release does not automatically mean they will be living in complete freedom now. Also pray for their health; that they can receive proper health care. Also remember the Iranian church in your prayers as the church is under a lot of pressure. Recently the Assemblies of God Church in central Tehran was summoned to stop organizing services in Farsi on Friday afternoons.

Over the last few months, Open Doors has urged supporters to pray for the women and launched an email advocacy campaign on their behalf.

An estimated 100 million Christians worldwide suffer interrogation, arrest and even death for their faith in Christ, with millions more facing discrimination and alienation. Open Doors supports and strengthens believers in the world's most difficult areas through Bible and Christian literature distribution, leadership training and assistance, Christian community development, prayer and presence ministry and advocacy on behalf of suffering believers. To partner with Open Doors USA, call toll free at 888-5-BIBLE-5 (888-524-2535) or go to our Website at www.OpenDoorsUSA.org.

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