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Iranian Christians Face Increasing Pressure and Harassment

MASHAD, Iran — Fereshteh Dibaj and her husband Amir Montazemi were arrested by secret police on Tuesday, September 26, 2006 in Mashad, Iran. Fereshteh is the daughter of Rev. Mehdi Dibaj, an Iranian church leader murdered in 1994.

At about 7:00am, several men from the Iranian secret police raided their apartment and confiscated their computers, Christian literature, and other items they thought may be of interest to them. Amir had a chance to call his mother to come and take their six year old daughter, Christine; however, when she arrived Amir and Fereshteh had already been forced into the police car. When Amir's mother went into the apartment to get Christine, there were still two men searching the apartment. She asked them why this was happening and where they were taking Amir and Fereshteh; she was told they were being taken to a certain police station, which turned out not to be the case. They were in fact taken to a secret police station belonging to the notorious Revolutionary Guard.

Amir's parents have made repeated attempts to find out why their son and Fereshteh have been detained, but so far have not received any reply, other than being told that the interrogation is still continuing.

On September 28, the authorities informed Amir's parents that the couple was to appear before a revolutionary court at a certain time and location, but when they went to witness the trial, Amir and Fereshteh were not there. They were told to come back the following Saturday for a possible trial then.

On Friday, September 29, Amir made a very brief phone call to say he was fine, although he had no information about Fereshteh. No one has heard from Fereshteh since the arrest.

Fereshteh is the youngest daughter of the Rev. Mehdi Dibaj who was killed for his faith on his way to Fereshteh's birthday party in the summer of 1994. Mehdi Dibaj had spent over nine years in prison on charges of apostasy. Six months prior to his murder, he had been sentenced to execution but was freed due to international pressure.

The wider Christian community in Iran faces increasing pressure and harassment from the Islamic regime.

Information for this report was provided by The Jubilee Campaign and compiled by Sarah Nagy, Genocide Watch.

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