

20 September 2018

Hon. Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani  
Head of the Judiciary  
c/o Public Relations Office  
Number 4, Deadend of 1 Azizi  
Above Pasteur Intersection  
Vali Asr Street  
**Tehran**  
**Islamic Republic of Iran**

Your Excellency,

As a member/supporter of ACAT-Switzerland, the Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture and the Death Penalty, I am writing to you on behalf of

**Victor Bet-Tamraz, his wife Shamiram Issavi, Amin Afshar-Naderi and Hadi Asgari**

Pastor Victor Bet-Tamraz and Shamiram Issavi, ethnic Assyrian Christians, and Amin Afshar-Naderi and Hadi Asgari, Christian converts, have been sentenced to between five and 15 years in prison. They have been targeted solely for peacefully practising their Christian faith. The authorities have cited peaceful activities such as holding private Christmas gatherings, organizing and conducting house churches, and travelling outside Iran to attend Christian seminars, as «illegal church activities» which «threaten national security» in order to justify their convictions. The individuals, who are all currently free on bail, are awaiting the verdict of the appeal court.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iran is a state party, states that “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teach” and that persons belonging to religious minorities “shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.” This framework also protects the right to convert from one religion or belief to another without repercussions from the state.

I am deeply concerned about the fate of Victor Bet-Tamraz, Shamiram Issavi, Amin Afshar-Naderi and Hadi Asgari and I urge you to:

- **Quash the convictions and sentences pronounced against them, as they have been targeted solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedoms of religion and belief, expression and association, through their Christian faith;**
- **Stop the harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention of Christians, including converts, in Iran;**
- **Respect the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion as guaranteed under the ICCPR, to which Iran is a state party.**

I thank you for the attention you will give to this concern.

Yours respectfully,

**Copy:** Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Thunstrasse 68, 3006 Berne

*ACAT-Switzerland is a politically neutral and independent human rights organisation affiliated to the International Federation of ACAT (FIACAT), which has consultative status with the United Nations and participative Status with the Council of Europe.*