**Iranian Christian Woman in Danger**

Rights monitors report that an ailing Christian woman held in Iran's Evin prison for three years has been denied medical leave.

Maryam Zargaran was arrested in 2012 and sentenced because of her Christian faith to four years in prison for supposed security-related crimes. She has been on a hunger strike for weeks, protesting the refusal of authorities to grant her medical treatment or leave. According to Iran's New Islamic Penal Code, prisoners can apply for conditional release after serving a third of their sentence. Ms. Zargaran is reportedly suffering from heart and hearing problems and other serious ailments, and has complained of poor treatment from the prison's clinic.

Both Amnesty International and the U.S. State Department have noted and condemned the practice by Iranian authorities of denying proper medical care to prisoners of conscience and other political prisoners.

Both have also noted that the persecution of religious minorities in Iran continues unabated. Iran remains a “Country of Particular Concern” under the International Religious Freedom Act in the U.S.

Christians, Muslims who do not adhere to the government's official interpretation of Islam, Yarsanis, Jews, and, most particularly, Baha'is face discrimination, arbitrary arrest, imprisonment and worse, because of their faith, despite President Hassan Rouhani's promise in 2013 that “All ethnicities, all religions, even religious minorities, must feel justice.”

Iran has ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both of which guarantee freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. Secretary of State John Kerry has said that the basis of this critical freedom is respect:

“And respect, in turn, demands legal equality. It demands that the practitioners of one faith understand that they have no right to coerce others into submission, conversion, or silence, or to literally take their lives because of their beliefs."

The United States, as President Barack Obama has said, “remain[s] committed to promoting religious freedom, both at home and across the globe...and urge[s] every country to recognize religious freedom as both a universal right and as a key to a stable, prosperous and peaceful future.”